Don’t Hate Me

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Don’t Hate Me

by hannibalsbirthdaycake

Summary

Will Graham is a freshman in high school, and he's always been sort of a loner. He thinks it's too good to be true when none other than Francis Dolarhyde, a senior, shows an interest in him. When things go terribly wrong and his secrets get out, Hannibal is there to help him through it all.

Contains attempted rape/non-con (between Francis and Will), underage (tagged mostly because both Will and Hannibal are underage), and graphic depictions of violence.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nervousness makes its home in Will Graham's stomach as he steps out of his dad's truck at the front of his high school. It's the first day of his freshman year and he'd rather be literally anywhere else. He's never been particularly good at making friends and he doesn't expect it to be any different now. Sweat forms on his brow and dampening his curls against his forehead as he walks through the open double doors into the main corridor.

He wonders how he looks to the kids he'd gone to middle school with, wondering if he looks different. He certainly feels different, having filled out and grown a little taller since last school year. Though, the gain in his height still isn't enough to keep the upper classmen from towering over him. He grips the straps of his backpack nervously as he navigates this new building.

He knows this building was completed in 2007, and had its first students inside during the 2008 school year. He wonders, then, if this building isn't ancient like the middle school—why are there obvious leaks in the ceiling? He looks up to see various water stains on the ceiling tiles and wonders if there's mold growing here. The thought makes him frown, knowing that mold often upsets his allergies.

He keeps his head down for the most part after that, only glancing up every now and then to make sure he's going the right way. He needs to find his locker first, then make his way to homeroom. He looks at his watch, seeing he only has a few minutes before the bell rings and quickens his pace. Keeping his head down quickly turns out to be a mistake because he crashes into Francis Dolarhyde—a *super* senior. Meaning he was supposed to graduate the previous school year but was held back for some reason or another. *Probably because he was in jail during final exams* , Will muses to himself.

He stands up, mumbling an apology and moves to continue down the hallway but there's a hand on his shoulder and now, Francis is staring at him. The grip on him tightens, causing Will to wince in pain. He risks a glance upward to meet Dolarhyde's eyes, and can't miss the scar on his lip from what Will believes is a cleft palate repair.

"Watch where you're going, pretty boy," Francis says in warning, then lets Will go.

He nods frantically and moves away now that his shoulder is free. There are no more incidents and he finally locates his locker, just as the first bell rings. Quickly opening the combination lock and pulling the door open, he pauses before tossing his backpack in, seeing a piece of paper on the shelf of the locker. He picks up the paper and is surprised to see a drawing—a really good one. It depicts a little girl, playing on a dock next to a pond. She is smiling up at the drawer, and it makes Will smile. The little girl's eyes are so expressive, even confined within a drawing made of pencil marks. He decides to keep the drawing and slides it into his folder.

“Welcome to high school!” His homeroom teacher calls out once everyone is seated.

“You’ll all meet here for this first week, then you’ll begin reporting directly to your first period class.” She says, smiling. “My name is Mrs. Perry and I’ll be glad to answer any questions you may have. Consider me your guide through this first week.”

Mrs. Perry walks everyone through some basic rules and procedures for the school and passes out the school handbook which outlines rules, dress codes, and punishments. In school suspension seems to be the most popular method for punishing transgressions, which Will is thankful for. He doesn’t want to think of what his dad might do if he ever got suspended or had after school detention.

Looking down at his schedule, he is glad to see he has honors biology for first period. He likes science, having always found it interesting. The class isn’t too far away from his homeroom, so he doesn’t have to rush to get there. He stops at the restroom at the end of the hallway and goes inside a stall and latches the door. He unbuckles his belt and sits down, when he gets startled by a rap on the stall door.

“C’mon out, Willy! Are you shy?” Matthew Brown calls out. “Why don’t you ever use the urinals?”

Will ignores him, finishing his business and flushing. He unlatches the door where Matthew is still waiting. He’s pretty sure Matthew doesn’t know why he doesn’t use the urinals and he’s not about to tell him. His secret is his alone, and nobody at this school knows. He’d like to keep it that way, given they’re in the south—the Bible Belt, more specifically. Kids here likely wouldn’t take well to him being trans. The thought makes his stomach churn, he knows it won’t be a secret forever.

“Leave me alone, Matthew.” Will replies, exasperated.

He’d half hoped Matthew would be transferred to a different high school, but the hope was naive and unlikely at best. Matthew isn’t his worst bully, but he’s up there and has gotten worse as they’ve gotten older. He’s like a bloodhound. He *knows* there’s something up with Will. Ever since they’d met last year, he could tell something is *off* about him.

Will has two secrets. The other is written all over his skin in red scarring and healing scabs. He cuts himself when the world becomes too much to handle— *overstimulation* a therapist from his youth had called it. He’s autistic and highly empathetic, often assuming points of view against his own wishes. It’s a bad combination and it’s no surprise that he’d resorted to self harm to deal with it.

He’s okay at masking, with most students unaware of his autism diagnosis, though teachers are made aware at the start of every school year. Some of them give him pitiful looks, and others make it known he won’t get any special treatment. He long ago decided he prefers the teachers that treat him like everyone else. But his autism doesn’t make him feel ashamed, and if other kids knew, he doesn’t think it’d really bother him.

Only the school administration and the nurse knows he’s trans—not even his teachers know since it isn’t relevant to his instruction. He was incredibly nervous to come out to his father,

knowing where they live. They're not religious and his father spends more time in a bottle than he does with anything else, so he was angry at Will but eventually conceded and allowed him to see a doctor.

He'd started testosterone over the summer and it seems to have played a role in making him fill out. He was pleasantly surprised when his voice deepened and he actually began to grow some stubble on his face. He's very happy that he was able to begin testosterone before puberty really began, though he still binds to flatten his chest. He knows he could get away without it, but in a way, it makes him feel more secure. The pressure against his chest and around his ribs is almost grounding at times.

A less than present, alcoholic, and workaholic father does have its advantages. His mother left them when he was just a baby, so he doesn't remember her. Though, he often wonders if she thinks about him. Does she miss him? Does she even know she has a *son* ?

He decides he likes biology and his instructor. Mr. Price, who insisted his class just call him Price. Will likes the casual atmosphere of the class and he feels comfortable there. The room isn't overly decorated and there aren't too many bright colors. The fluorescent lights are annoying, but they're in every classroom. It's also an honors class so most of his bullies aren't in there, having opted to take the regular versions of their classes.

"We're going to partner up for the semester!" Price says loudly.

Will watches as the other students eye one another, planning who they'll partner up with. Price then says he'll be choosing partners for everyone, and instructs everyone to try and make a new friend. Will likes that, since he didn't have anyone in mind, he won't be the odd one out for once. Choosing partners has always been stressful for him, and sometimes he'd ask if he could work alone. Some teachers allowed it, others didn't.

"Will Graham, you're with Beverly Katz." Price says, pointing at the girl with the black hair.

He gets up and sits next to her, offering a quiet hello. She leans in closer to him, resting on her elbows. They listen quietly as the rest of the room gets paired up, then Price gives them their first assignment. A *frog dissection* —on the first day, no less. Will shrugs to himself, and they prepare their tools and get the frog ready to dissect. Price tells everyone to work on identifying the major organs, and then lets them loose to work for the remainder of the class period.

"You unstable?" Beverly asks with a half smile.

"What?" Will replies, incredulously.

"You don't communicate well, and you haven't made eye contact with me since we were partnered together." She clarifies.

"I'm autistic. Not unstable." He says, unamused.

In reality he probably *is* somewhat unstable, since he does hurt himself on occasion. Though, he often blames it on his autism, and perhaps some depression. He'd hoped he'd feel better

once he started testosterone, but it didn't seem to make a difference. He and Beverly work quietly for the remainder of the period. He glances over toward her occasionally, wondering if she thinks he's weird like most everyone else, but finds he has trouble reading her.

"What do you do for fun?" She asks.

Will quirks an eyebrow at the question. He's not sure he's ever been asked that. *What does he do for fun?*

"I, uh, take my dogs for walks. Sometimes I go fishing." He finally answers.

"Sounds nice," She observes.

Belatedly, he realizes he should probably ask her. *That's the polite thing to do, right?*

"What do you do?"

"Parties, mostly. I'm also in the forensic science club." She says.

"Forensic science club?"

"Yes! We actually meet for the first time next week. You should join! It's held in this room directly after school, Price is the supervisor." She says, excitedly.

"I'll think about it," Will says with a smile.

When the bell rings signaling the end of first period, Will leaves, feeling almost hopeful for the school year. Maybe he can become friends with Beverly. She doesn't seem weirded out by his mannerisms, and it's like a breath of fresh air.

The rest of the day moves slowly. Next is honors English, then geometry, art class, and his most dreaded last class of the day; gym. In middle school, they didn't have to change for gym class, always allowed to wear whatever clothing they'd come to school in. The only requirement was that they wear tennis shoes. Now, in high school, each student is given a set of gym clothes that have to change into.

He already knows he's going to hate the locker rooms. He just hopes there are stalls for privacy. He really doesn't want everyone seeing him in a state of near undress. He sighs, walking into the room. There are no stalls to be found, so he either has to undress in the main locker room where everyone can see or he can refuse and surely be sent to in school suspension. On his first day, no less.

He decides to risk it, and finds a more secluded corner to change. Stripping off his shirt quickly and throwing the new one on, nobody notices his body, though it probably helps that he was early. Once his shirt is changed, he sighs, some relief washing over him. Next, he sheds his jeans, but as he does that, other boys begin filing into the locker room.

Gym class is one of a few classes where lower and upper classmen often mix, and of course he shares gym class with Francis Dolarhyde, Matthew Brown, and Fredrick Chilton. He

internally groans, knowing this isn't going to end well for him. Before he can get the gym shorts over his thighs, Francis approaches him.

"What do we have here?" He sneers, gesturing toward Will's scars littering his thighs.

Will looks up, wide eyed and unsure what to do. He grabs the waistband and pulls it the rest of the way up while Francis stares. His heart is hammering in his chest and he wants to run, but instead he's frozen in his spot. He knows he's likely pointing out the scars on his thighs, and the thought of that secret getting out scares him less than his other secret.

"What a freak," Fredrick Chilton adds.

"You can't handle life so you cut yourself?" Matthew Brown says next, his tone mocking.

Will looks down at his socked feet, unsure what to do or say. Then, Chilton is pinning his neck beneath his forearm, invading his space. His head hits a locker with more force than he'd anticipated and the pain ricochets through him, making his vision go fuzzy for a few seconds.

"Such a *girl* thing to do," Francis says, laughing.

He doesn't know , Will tells himself. He can't know. Other boys look on at the spectacle. They don't get involved, but some look at Will with pity, and he hates it more than having his head physically pushed into a locker. Fredrick leaves him when they hear the coach's whistle ring through the locker room.

"Stop fucking around and get out here!" He yells, and all the boys fall in line. All but Will.

The coach gives him a look, as if to say he knows what just happened. Will doubts that, but moves toward him anyway, cradling the back of his head. Will exits the locker room in front of the coach and they head into the gym. Everyone is standing there looking at him when he walks in, and he hates it. He wants to turn around, leave the building, and go home.

"My name is Coach Crawford. You can call me Coach." He says once the class quiets. "Let's start our semester with everyone's favorite game; dodge ball."

There's cheering at that, most everyone is excited for the game. Some of the girls look on, unamused. And Will. He doesn't mind gym class, at least—he didn't. It was so much better in middle school, he decides. As everyone divides into two teams, Will sees a boy from the locker room pull Coach Crawford aside. He watches them both look over at him and he frowns.

"Mr. Graham, come here." Coach says, and Will is obeying immediately. "I've been told something particularly troubling about you."

"Yes, sir?" Will replies meekly.

"Go see the school counselor, please. I'll let her know you're coming."

Will's stomach drops at that and he considers whether or not it would be worth it to just skip out and go home for the day. He quickly decides that no, it isn't worth it and heads out of the gym, his head hung low. He walks slowly toward the administrative hallway of the school, knowing what the conversation is going to involve, and only hoping they don't call his dad.

Sitting in the small waiting area outside the counselors office, Will bounces his knee nervously. He pulls out his phone while he waits, to check and see if he's got any notifications—but as usual, his phone is quiet. At times he wonders why he bothers carrying it around with him. His train of thought is derailed when the door to the counselor's office opens. An older boy with blonde hair and strikingly maroon eyes walks out, smirk on his face.

"Hannibal, I don't want to see you again this week! Do you understand?" The counselor calls out to him.

"Will Graham? Come in," She says, turning her focus to him now.

He walks inside and the office is much more comfortable than he imagined. There are no fluorescent lights in here and the walls are painted a calming, muted blue. He decides he likes it, glad to have a break from the business of the rest of the school. There are several motivational posters on the wall, one has a cat and the words *'Hang in There'*.

Sitting down on the couch, he's surprised at how comfortable it is. The fabric is soft against his hands. He relaxes a bit at the entire atmosphere, almost forgetting where he is in the first place. The counselor turns on the white noise machine outside the office, then sits in the chair behind her desk.

"I'm Dr. Bloom. Do you know why you're here?" She begins. Her tone lacks the pity he often hears from adults, instead, it sounds like a genuine interest—perhaps a professional curiosity.

"Uh, no… ma'am." Will answers, not wishing to give it away if she doesn't already know.

"A concerned student saw the wounds on your thighs." She says, not beating around the bush. "Would you like to explain that?"

"Not particularly," He replies, miserably.

"You'll have to talk to me unless you want me to call your father."

Will looks up at that, making eye contact with her for the first time.

"Please… don't do that."

"So tell me, are your wounds self inflicted?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

Will could go all out, tell her how he gets overstimulated and depressed and cutting into his skin is the only thing that brings things back down to a manageable level. He could say that each cut feels like a little bit of his pain is seeping out of the wound along with the blood, but he doesn't.

"I like the way it feels."

She purses her lips at that, while it's not technically untrue, she knows it isn't the whole story. It's obvious she isn't going to crack Will in just one session, so she leaves it be, vowing to continue that particular line of questioning during their next session.

"Now… I know that you're trans. Do you think that plays a role in it?"

"No… it doesn't."

In fact, coming out as trans improved his mental health tremendously. He'd spent years feeling as if he were born in the wrong body—never knowing that he actually *was* . When he'd discovered it in elementary school, he'd known immediately he was trans. There was no doubt in his mind. Living as a male, being referred to as Will instead of his deadname, and not going through puberty as female probably saved his life. Even despite the strained relationship it had caused with his father, and even despite the fact it led them to pulling him from that elementary school and putting him in another so other students would never know who he used to pretend to be.

Dr. Bloom promises Will she won't call his father, but tells him if something else happens, she'll have to. She says he'll have to come see her once a week during his gym period and, while that is scary, is going to be a nice break from gym. He leaves her office just as the bell rings and he heads to his locker, thankful Francis and the others are nowhere to be found.

Chapter End Notes

I already have the second chapter done! Will post it soon! Please keep an eye out on the tags—they will change and more will be added!

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next morning arrives far too quickly in Will's opinion. He'd been exhausted when he got home for the day and spent the afternoon avoiding his father. He's always surprised that his dad manages to keep a job with how much he drinks, but as long as he does, Will is going to do his best to stay out of his way. He tries his damndest to stay out of trouble and to not bother his dad in fear of retaliation.

He's sure his father loves him, but it's hard to remember that when he's drinking. He drives Will to school, obviously hungover. He's 15 now and should start driver's education soon. He wonders if he'll be allowed to drive himself to school soon.

"Have a good day, son." His dad says.

Even now, hearing his father call him 'son' makes him smile. The only real constant in his life has been his father, and he's not sure he'd survived if he hadn't been accepted by him. He loves his dad, despite his flaws.

"You too, dad."

He feels good about today, opting not to worry about what's to come in gym class. He makes it to biology right on time and spends the beginning of the class period with Beverly preparing agar plates for a lab they'll be doing on bacteria. It's a fun, albeit simple lab. Basically, each pair will find and swab random things and see what grows in the dish. He'd done this experiment before in middle school for the science fair, and he certainly doesn't mind doing it again.

"What are you thinking of swabbing?" Beverly asks.

"My cell phone, the door handle, maybe something in the bathroom?" Will muses.

"All good choices… but let's do something nobody else is going to do!" Beverly exclaims.

To himself, he wonders what would happen if he swabbed the healing cuts on his thigh. Would bacteria be growing there, even after he's thoroughly disinfected them? He's sure there is, since humans have a multitude of bacteria on their skin—it doesn't necessarily mean it's harmful.

"What about money?" Will asks, fishing in his pocket for his wallet.

"That's a good one!"

He pulls out a dollar bill that's obviously seen better days. It's taped together in the middle and has writing on it in sharpie. There are a number of mystery stains along the edges as well. Beverly picks it up with her index finger and thumb as if to touch it as little as possible.

Placing it back down on the table, she takes a swab out of the packaging and rubs it against the bill, then rubs the swab against the agar plate. Placing the top on the Petri dish, she writes in marker *'Will's $1 bill'*.

"Great. So what's next?" Will asks.

"Lunch! Chicken is on the menu. Let's see if there's bacteria there."

Will agrees, and before they know it, class is over. Beverly gives him her number and says to text her if he comes up with any other ideas.

He doesn't mind English, and finds the book they're reading interesting, *'Fahrenheit 451 '*. Considering he'd already read the book and several others over the summer, he spends his time working on the book report while everyone else reads. He has always liked school—not so much the atmosphere or the people, but the promise that he'll get to learn something new every day. It's calming in a way, to know that even when everything else is up in the air.

Later in the day, he meets up with Beverly at lunch and they sit together to work on the biology experiment. It only takes a moment, then they leave early to get the Petri dish back to the biology lab. Once it's dropped off, they go their separate ways—Beverly back to lunch and Will over toward the library. He hasn't gotten the chance to explore it yet and wants to find some more books to read.

"Will Graham," Francis Dolarhyde purrs, making the hairs on the back of his neck stand.

Will whips around, now face to face with him. It's obvious there's something inherently dangerous about Francis, though Will can't quite figure out what. He just knows being around him triggers his fight or flight response into overdrive. Francis smiles wolfishly, and Will can't help but hunch his shoulders in to appear smaller.

"What do you want?" He tries for confidence but it comes out quietly, more like a squeak than a growl.

"Don't be like that," Francis hums, "Maybe I just wanna be your friend."

"Yeah, sure." Will replies dryly.

In truth, Francis is curious about Will. He'd seen the cuts and scars littering his body and wants to know what would make someone do that. It's not concern, but rather a twisted fascination and a desire to press buttons. He really just wants to see what would happen. He knows he's a bully, and he really doesn't care. He steps into Will's space, their chests almost touching now.

Will's heart beats wildly inside his chest, and he takes ragged breaths. He hates having his personal space invaded like this— *especially* like this. He feels like prey. He doesn't know what Francis wants, and all he can focus on now is the smell of the other boy's halitosis and stale cigarette smoke. The warm puffs of breath against his face make him feel like his skin is too tight. Francis tilts his head, and smiles with teeth as he steps back from Will.

“See you in the locker room,” Francis says, giving a faux friendly wave goodbye.

What the fuck? Will wonders to himself. He still feels his heart hammering inside his chest and there’s sweat forming along his brow but also… there’s something else stirring in his belly. *Arousal?* He does find Francis objectively attractive, but the boy is clearly bad news. Despite his brain knowing it’s a bad idea, his pupils had still dilated with lust, and his rapid heartbeat wasn’t only from fear.

He shakes his head, disappointed at himself as he makes his way to the library. The interaction with Francis took longer than he’d thought it had in the moment and he only gets a few minutes to peruse the books. He doesn’t select any books, since his indecisiveness doesn’t allow him to make a decision in time, so he vows to himself to come back tomorrow at lunch.

He makes it to his art class with a few minutes to spare, and sees the room mostly empty. Only a few other students are there setting up their materials for the period. He sits in the back, at a table that wobbles in hopes that no one will sit by him. He’s had enough socialization today. He half smiles to himself when the bell rings and his table has remained empty save for him.

Everyone gets to work on sketching a still life, and he is startled when the door opens suddenly and a boy strolls in. It’s the kid from the counselor’s office. *What was his name?* Will thinks to himself. He doesn’t recall, but it looks like he’ll get the chance to ask because of course the boy is making his way to the back to sit at Will’s table.

He doesn’t realize he’s staring until the boy looks over at him, flashing him a smile. This kid wasn’t here yesterday, he thinks. He’d been led to believe he didn’t share any classes with him. And to be honest, he hadn’t thought of the boy since seeing him coming out of Dr. Bloom’s office.

“You’re at my table, you know.” The mystery boy says.

“I don’t see your name on it anywhere,” Will retorts with a roll of his eyes. “What is your name?”

“Hannibal Lecter. And you’re Will Graham.” Hannibal says.

“Wha—how do you know that?” Will replies, brows furrowed.

“It’s not rocket science. I saw you as I was coming out of Dr. Bloom’s office yesterday. I don’t forget a face or a name. *Especially* one like yours.”

Will finds himself blushing at that. The tone in which Hannibal said it seemed to imply he finds Will attractive, at least, that’s what Will thinks he was trying to say. He shakes his head, mentally berating himself for being a *whore* today. First, he gets aroused by his bully, and now he’s blushing because some other kid might have implied that he was attractive? *Get it together!* He chastises himself.

He can't help but glance over to Hannibal's sketchbook, immediately mesmerized by the sheer skill found in the way he sketches a still life. He diverts his eyes when Hannibal glances over to him, not wanting to be caught outright staring. It's obvious Hannibal knows —if the smirk on his face says anything.

Will hates himself for being so painfully awkward. And by the time class ends, he wants to hit his forehead into the desk. He'd gotten very little of his drawing done, instead spending his time trying to figure out a way to start a conversation with the captivating boy next to him. He sighs audibly once Hannibal packs up his things and stands.

"Are you alright?" Hannibal asks.

"Oh… um, yes. Completely fine!" Will answers, voice high pitched and laced with anxiety.

He almost crashes into Hannibal as he gets up to leave, his cheeks flushed so pink his face looks downright red. He remembers what his next class is once he's out of the room. It's gym. And of course Francis and his friends are in that class, too.

He needs to deal with his confusing feelings toward Francis. Like a schoolboy crush, he wonders if maybe Francis likes him and that's why he's been so… *weird* . Will tries to physically shake the thought from where it's lodged itself in his brain, but of course the action is useless.

He gets to the locker room early enough that he can change before anyone else arrives. He sighs in relief at that, at least *something* has gone his way. He really doesn't want to be reported to the guidance counselor again. Not for the same thing. He hasn't even hurt himself since the last time—it's a feat he's proud of, though it's only been a day.

Self harm often feels akin to an addiction. It's a rush to feel the blade slice into your skin and down into the fatty tissue below. The endorphins it releases makes Will feel okay—even if just for a moment. He always finds himself wishing he'd cut more… or cut deeper afterwards. While the feeling is soothing, it also often leaves him with a feeling of wanting. A feeling of wanting more pain, more wounds, more *proof* of what he's been through . It's as if the cuts say 'look here, look at what he's made it through!'.

Gym class goes by without a hitch, and before he knows it, the bell is ringing and he's free for the day. He waits for everyone else to change in the lock room before he goes in. Coach Crawford watches him intently, but doesn't say anything. It's really not his business if a student doesn't want to change in front of others. He understands being self conscious. Especially in high school with awkward—not quite adult, but also not quite childlike bodies.

Once Will thinks everyone has changed and left for the day, he goes into the locker room. The coast appearing clear, he goes to his corner and begins undressing—working quickly due to the off chance someone comes back in. He can hear coach Crawford speaking to someone out in the hall, but he can't quite make it out. Instead, he focuses on getting his sweaty shirt off and donning his flannel once more.

That's when he hears a wolf whistle behind him. He swallows thickly and his hands shake as the work the last two buttons together. Sufficiently covered, he turns around. It's Francis.

Only Francis. His friends are nowhere to be found.

“What—what do you want?” Will asks, voice cracking.

A nervous mixture of anxiety and arousal swirl in his stomach and he doesn’t know where to run or stay and talk. He still doesn’t know what Francis wants from him and he isn’t going to ask. Something tells him he would be less than forthcoming, anyway.

“I want you.” Francis answers, smiling.

It’s a softer smile than what Will has seen from the boy, and it makes his insides melt. He feels the arousal completely overshadow the anxiety and he know his face is flushing pink. It’s clear what Francis means by his words now.

“Me? You want… me?” Will replies in disbelief.

Chapter End Notes

I do already have chapter 3 written! I'm trying to be one chapter ahead when I update this fic so I can do it more regularly. We'll see how that goes.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

There's a section in this chapter that deals with non-consensual sexual acitivity. I've marked the beginning and end of the scene with

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I'll put a summary in the notes at the end.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Francis gives Will his number, and they spend the following week texting back and forth. He finds the boy can be nice and thoughtful. It's an odd dichotomy since Francis still treats him poorly in school. Will wonders if perhaps it's because his friends don't know he's gay.

When Francis' texts turn more sexual, it makes Will's tongue sit heavy between his teeth with the desire to *taste* him. There's a nagging feeling of wrongness settling in his stomach as well. Francis is 18—almost 19, and Will is only 15. The age gap seems large, almost as if he's a boy dating a man. *Are they even dating?*

He had always known he liked older men, considering most of his celebrity crushes are over 40 and have graying hair. He'd also spent some time on Yahoo! Messenger in the chat rooms before they'd closed them. He'd chatted with many men, relishing the attention from a multitude of men. He'd even told some of them he was trans, and they never minded. It was freeing, being online. He could be whoever he wanted. If only he could have a modicum of that confidence in his actual life.

He and Beverly have become close, and have been texting back and forth as well. He bites his lip, considering whether or not to tell her about Francis. He's worried what she'll think, since she's seen the other boy be cruel to Will. Nonetheless, he makes the decision to tell her during their lunch period. He feels the need to tell *someone* , and why not her?

Francis occasionally texts Will throughout the school day, but he never mentions their interactions in school. It's like they're two different people. The Francis he's come to know can be kind—sweet, even. It sometimes gives him whiplash to have Francis corner him in the locker room, a wolfish smile on his face, and the texts he gets before that, asking how his day was.

Sometimes he types out *'it would be better if you would acknowledge me as your boyfriend at school',* but he always deletes it. They've never put a label on what they are, he reminds himself. Before his gym period where he always sees Francis, he has art class. Hannibal, the boy who sits at his table is interesting, though he doesn't speak often.

“Hello, Will.” Hannibal greets as Will plops down on his chair.

“Hey,” Will replies, not looking up.

He still finds Hannibal really attractive, but often has to remind himself he’s seeing someone now. And to be honest, he’s not sure how Francis would take it if he found out Will liked someone else, so he does his best not to look at Hannibal as he draws. To ignore the way the boy’s deft hands hold the pencil and make pencil marks that have no business looking as *beautiful* as they do.

Will’s piece, on the other hand, is less beautiful. He’s not sure why he decided to take an art class, he clearly doesn’t have the talent for it. He’s been struggling with his still life, even though the objects he’d chosen are simple. A glass bottle sitting next to a orange with a banana behind them. He’d assumed the composition would be an easy one for him, but he was wrong. He’s erased so much on his paper, it’s beginning to tear in places. If it gets much worse, he’ll need to start over and he’d rather do anything else.

He sighs in frustration, dropping his pencil. He rubs at his cramping hand and looks over at Hannibal’s piece. He’s already painting his and the colors are breathtaking. Even more so knowing he’d chosen his images from his memory. He hadn’t even required a reference image. He paints with surgical precision, just as he had drawn. It looks like the other boy will finish his project today and will be able to move on to the next tomorrow.

“Pay more attention to your shading, and where your light source is coming from.” Hannibal says, pulling Will out of his thoughts.

Will looks down at his composition, seeing his shading on different sides, making the image he’s drawing look confusing. It certainly lacks the realism Hannibal’s has. He always feels his face heat up when Hannibal speaks to him, so he does his best to look at his composition and nothing else. He carefully erases the shading and fills it back in correctly, all on the same side, and it makes his piece arguably better.

“Thank you.” He says softly.

Hannibal watches Will for a moment, admiring his hands as they work with the pencil. He clearly understood Hannibal’s advice, and his piece already looks like it might be just as good as his own when he’s finished. He smirks, knowing he often makes the other boy flustered when he speaks to him. He doesn’t wish to embarrass the boy so he doesn’t say anything else to him, and instead focuses on his own piece.

Later that afternoon, after he’s changed back into his street clothes and the last bell of the day has rung, Francis approaches him. Will prepares himself to be mocked or bodily shoved against the brick wall, but he isn’t. Instead, Francis invites him over to his house. Will says yes, thinking it will be just the two of them.

He texts his dad, letting him know he’s going to a friend’s house and leaves with Francis. He gets into Francis’ car, an old 1980s mustang, and is hit with the smell of marijuana. The scent is so strong he thinks he might be getting a contact high.

“What do you want to do?” Will asks, expectantly.

“I thought we could just hang out, pass a joint around. Maybe have some of my dad’s whiskey.” Francis replies.

The thought makes Will nervous. He’s never smoked weed or drank alcohol. He ignores the urge to respond, to say it’s illegal. He reminds himself Francis is basically a man, and he should just defer to his judgment. The thought still has him looking down and fiddling with his thumbs.

“Sounds like fun,” He finally says, realizing he didn’t say anything.

They get to Francis’ house and go inside. His father is out of town for work so they have the house to themselves, at least for a little while. Apparently, Francis has a younger brother who also goes to the high school. He rides the bus and doesn’t arrive home when Francis does.

Will awkwardly introduces himself and learns the brother’s name is Eric. He grunts a greeting and leaves the pair in the living room. Francis turns on the TV and flips through the channels. He stops on X-Files and Will perks up, leaning forward on the couch to see it better.

“You like this nerdy shit?” Francis asks, though his tone isn’t mocking.

“Yeah… I mean, it’s pretty cool.” Will answers.

They’re sitting next to each other, though there’s almost enough space for someone else to sit between them. Francis slides over so their thighs are touching and he places his hand on his upper thigh. He rubs the denim covered skin slowly, and looks at Will expectantly. Will meets his gaze, but he’s not sure what he’s supposed to do.

Thankfully, Francis doesn’t leave him guessing for long and closes the distance between their lips in a kiss. He grabs at Will’s back, pressing him closer and moans. He works his long fingers into Will’s hair and tugs gently, eliciting a gasp from the younger boy.

Will’s insides feel hot, like molten lava. His blood is boiling and it feels like it’s all traveling south. He feels himself become aroused and has to stop himself from straddling Francis’ lap and grinding down. Though, the option is taken from him when Francis grabs him and puts him on his lap. He gasps in surprise.

He kisses Francis and takes the lead this time, biting and sucking gently on the older boy’s lip. The confidence leeches out of him when Francis’ hands travels under Will’s shirt to push it up and off his head. He grabs his wrist to stop him, but lets it go when he meets his eyes. He’s not wearing a binder and his chest doesn’t look feminine. *It will be fine* , he tells himself.

With his shirt off and his chest exposed, he feels the urge to cover himself with his arms, but he resists it. Francis runs his nails down Will’s back, eliciting a shiver from him. His fingers grab at his nipple, taking it between his index finger and thumb.

“You look so sexy,” Francis whispers.

Will blushes, biting his lip. He’d never been called sexy before, not like this. Then, Francis’ mouth is on his nipple and he’s sucking it fervently. Will groans in appreciation, arousal continuing to grow and he feels himself getting wet. *More like soaked* , his mind supplies.

He stops, completely stills when Francis hand moves to the button of his jeans. He doesn’t know Will is trans, and he’d believed he would have more time to allow the subject to come up. This time, he grabs his wrist and stops him.

“Are you a virgin?” Francis asks, moving his hand away from the button for now.

“Yes.” Will replies quietly, face reddening.

“The way you moaned when your nipple was in my mouth had me fooled. You’re my little virgin slut.” Francis purrs.

Will resists the urge to ask what he means. He’d said it with a tone of endearment, but it sounds all wrong to him. *How can someone be a virgin and a slut?* He wonders to himself. He shakes his head minutely, reminding himself there are a multitude of things people say that he just doesn’t *get* .

He gets off Francis’ lap, feeling as if he’s dodged a bullet, though he knows he’s only delayed the inevitable. Maybe this is why Francis invited him over—he intends to have sex with Will. The thought makes Will nervous, his stomach tying in knots in a way that isn’t even remotely arousing. He puts his shirt back on and settles back in beside Francis.

He and Francis watch some of the X-Files until there’s a knock on the door. Will jumps in his seat, not expecting the noise from the door. He looks up belatedly to see Francis opening the door and letting some boys from school in. Matthew and Frederick file in, laughing at a joke they had said before they walked inside. Will watches curiously as Matthew pulls some weed out of his bag. It’s already rolled into a few joints. Francis, at some point, had grabbed his father’s bottle of Jack Daniels and takes a swig straight from the bottle.

“So you and Will, huh?” Frederick asks.

“Me and Will,” Francis confirms, laughing.

Will’s brow quirks up at it. The laughter makes it sound like a joke. Maybe he is just a joke for them. The thought settles in his stomach like lead, making him shift nervously in his seat.

“I guess he’s pretty cute, but I don’t swing that way.” Frederick says.

“You’re bisexual!” Matthew replies.

“Oh, I meant *crazy* .”

All the boys save for Will start laughing. He fights the urge to get up and walk out, to tell Francis to go to hell and never speak to him again but instead, he stays put. Finally, their laughter dies down and they light the joint.

When it gets passed to Francis, he takes a long drag and hands it to Will. At first, Will shakes his head no. But everyone begins cajoling him but he only concedes once they threaten to hold him down and get him high. Francis says he needs to loosen up. He coughs hard, feeling the smoke burn down his throat and into his lungs. He doesn't know why people do this—it doesn't feel good.

He ends up taking a few more drags and then, he starts to understand why people do it. He begins to feel pleasantly warm, as if his insides are buzzing in all the best ways. He only wants to lie down on the couch and stare at the ceiling. The rest of the boys are now passing the bottle of whiskey around, each chugging it before handing it over. Francis nudges at Will, and he ends up taking a swig as well.

Feeling the alcohol and weed swirl around inside him makes him feel woozy. It isn't as nice as the weed was on its own. Numbly, he's aware that it isn't a good combination, but he's too inebriated to do much about it. He feels a headache coming on and all he really wants to do now is go lie down and he tells Francis as much.

"Alright, let's go to bed." Francis responds, smiling.

Matthew and Frederick laugh and wolf whistle to them as they walk away. Will doesn't understand what they're getting so worked up about since they're just going to lie down. The room sways as they go up the stairs to Francis' bedroom. He grabs onto his arm to steady himself and they make it through the door without further incident.

Francis shuts the door, clicking the lock and turns to Will. He grabs him, picking him up and carrying him to the bed situated in the corner of the room where it sits directly on the floor without a box spring or bed frame. He tosses him playfully down. Will giggles, not knowing what else to do and probably because of the marijuana and alcohol in his system.

Francis straddles him and begins kissing him with fervor. Will kisses back, overwhelmed by the sensation of his lips against another's. He moans appreciatively into the old boy's mouth until his hand is pushing up his shirt again. Will's throat tightens, he's too intoxicated to stop where this is going and he knows it. His arms work, but they do little more than hold on to Francis. It's as if they have no strength and he can't stop the boy from reaching down to his jeans once more.

"Relax baby," Francis whispers, still working at the button on Will's jeans.

"I don't—we don't need to do this." Will squeaks out, but it's too late.

Francis pops open the button and begins sliding the pants down, leaving the boxers in place. Will shuts his eyes tightly, as if it will make him appear somewhere else. *Anywhere* else. He didn't come here to have sex with Francis.

He knows it would have to happen eventually, but he thought by that point, he'd have told Francis his secret and it would be fine. He certainly didn't want the boy to find out this way. His arms come up to cover his eyes now as Francis begins palming at him. His ministrations stop when he realizes he's not feeling the right… *anatomy* beneath Will's boxers. Curious now, he hooks his thumbs into the garments and pulls them down, revealing Will entirely.

Watching Francis go through the motions, Will feels numb at first. He notices the radio is playing, the speakers loud in his ears. The song *'We Are Young'* radiates through the whole house and makes him dizzy. He belatedly realizes he's been stripped of his clothing below the waist and the fear comes back with such force, he feels as if he's choking.

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Will sobs, the exposure feeling more and more like a violation. Like he's a sideshow on display for everyone to gawk at. And that's exactly what Francis does—he gawks. His mouth falls open and his brows knit together in confusion.

"What the fuck, Will? What the fuck kind of game is this?!" Francis growls.

"I—" Will hiccups, "I was going to tell you."

He feels so ashamed, so disgusted with himself. And still too inebriated to feel the full force of the emotions threatening to crash down on him. His most closely guarded secret has been torn away from him, something he'd intended to keep secret until the end of high school. And now, he's here. Entirely laid bare and all he wants to do is curl up into the fetal position and will it all to go away.

"I'm bisexual, you know. It doesn't bother me that you're actually a *girl* ." Francis says, though his voice is laced with venom.

"So what's your real name?" Francis asks.

"It's Will."

"No, your *real* name."

"My name is Will. *Legally* ." He answers, as firmly as he can.

He knows Francis is asking about his deadname, but he isn't going to give that away, not if he can help it. At least it's something that he can hold on to. It won't be ripped away from him. Not here and not by Francis.

The older boy's touches become less soft and more pressing. He squeezes at Will's flat chest, pinching his nipples hard. Will yelps in pain, trying to wriggle away, but it's no use. Hands grope at his hips, gripping them and pulling them towards them. An investigative finger dips downward to Will's vulva, wetness still there from their earlier teasing. Two fingers rub against Will's clit and he feels sparks of unwanted, entirely uninvited pleasure.

Then, a finger is inside him, thrusting in and out, feeling his walls as they clinch around the intrusion. He tries and fails to grab Francis' arms and get them away from him. He adds a second finger and Will groans at the intrusion that now borders on painful. He renews his efforts of trying to wriggle away, but again, he fails. Francis is much stronger and larger than he is.

"You lied to me, the least you can do is let me fuck you." Francis admonishes.

“Ple—“ Will begins but the word catches in his throat when a third finger is added inside him. “Please—I *don’t* want to do this.”

“It’s too late. You’ve led me on all afternoon. You don’t want me to have blue balls, do you?”

Will stills at that. He *knows* blue balls aren’t really a thing, and definitely not a reason to make someone have sex with you. But how can he be sure since he hasn’t ever and can’t ever experience it?

“It’s not like you know what they are. You don’t have the right parts, do you?” Francis adds.

Will’s face twists in pain, tears rolling down his cheeks now. Not only are there fingers inside him, spearing him open, but now he’s also being berated? *Was keeping his secret really that bad? No.* He’d probably be in the same boat had he been a cis male, since Francis seems determined to fuck someone.

Will clamps his mouth shut and says nothing as Francis removes his fingers and fits a condom over his cock. Will watches numbly, his lower half already aching but his brain still fuzzy from the substances he’d consumed. There’s nothing he can do as Francis lines himself up with Will and begins to press in.

He groans loudly, the pain quickly becoming overwhelming. His efforts to get away are renewed and he tries to back away from Francis, but his head hits the wall. He’s now trapped between Francis and the wall, his neck bending painfully as Francis continues to try and push inside.

Will’s walls clench painfully as if in an attempt to keep the intrusion out, and it seems to work. Francis continues trying to thrust in, using more and more force each time but failing. He pulls his cock away and looks down at Will’s hole, in an attempt to figure out what the issue is. Will himself doesn’t understand why it hurts so much, and why it isn’t working. He’s only aware of the pain and the increasingly frustrated man between his legs. Once again, Francis lines himself up and tries to thrust inside, but this time, he hurts himself and finally admits defeat.

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He stands, allowing Will’s legs to close. Taking the condom off his cock and throwing it at Will, he dresses himself. Standing by his dresser, he crushes up some pain medicine and snorts it. Will watches detachedly, knowing he should get up, get some clothes on and leave. But he’s exhausted, a sudden laden weight settles in his bones and instead of doing any of the things he knows he should, he passes out.

Chapter End Notes

Scene summary:

Francis undresses Will and finds out he's trans. He's obviously angry and tries to rape him, but it doesn't work. He keeps trying until he hurts himself and gives up.

In case anyone is wondering, the reason Francis is unable to penetrate Will is a condition called vaginismus and hurts like a motherfucker. I dealt with it for years after an assault, and it seriously sucks.

Chapter 4

When Will wakes, it's to a dry mouth, an ache in the lower half of his body, and a pounding in his head. He sits up, looking down at himself seeing that he's still naked. Francis, Matthew, and Frederick are all in the room too. Passed out, each of them snoring. Will looks around frantically for his clothes, and finds them next to the bed he's on. He dresses quickly and quietly, hissing at the pain on his body as he does so. He picks up his phone, and he sees several texts and a missed call from Beverly.

'Call me!'

'Will, are you alright?!'

'I'll give you some space if you need it.'

Will quirks an eyebrow at that. Why would he need space?

Fuck! Francis knows he's trans now. He's probably told the entire school. Will bites his lip in an attempt to keep the tears at bay but they roll down his cheeks anyway. Running his hand through his unruly hair, he decides he'll get outside and call Beverly. From her texts, it doesn't seem like she hates him. *Oh god, what about his dad? Does he know what happened?*

His father hates being the center of attention, and having his son outed as trans in a place like this is a great way to put them in the spotlight. He hadn't even told his dad he was seeing someone, that he'd planned to stay over with them. He'd lied and told him he was going to Beverly's.

He shakes his head, deciding to deal with one fire at a time. Right now, that's getting away from here. He gets outside and walks down the road, feeling minutely better the further away he gets. His self-loathing and disgust with himself threatens to make him fall apart, but he tries to shove it all down to be dealt with later.

He walks a half mile from the house and sits down, deciding to look through his messages again. There are a few from unknown numbers calling him slurs and he deletes those, knowing Francis must have texted all of his friends about Will's perceived deception. *It wouldn't have been an issue if he hadn't pressured him into having sex so soon* , he thinks bitterly.

He sees one more text from an unknown number, but this one isn't filled with hateful words. Instead, someone is being kind. He doesn't recognize the number and doesn't know who it might be as he reads the text again.

'Hey, I know what it's like to feel like you don't belong. If you ever want to talk, I'll listen.'

Will racks his brain, trying to remember if someone had maybe exchanged numbers with him and he'd forgotten, but his mind is still foggy. His only real friend is Beverly and he knows her number. He doesn't really talk to anyone else… except Francis and he has his number

saved, too. His mind wanders to Hannibal next, the quiet boy he shares a table with in art class. They're only friendly with one another due to close proximity, he's sure. It can't be him. Plus, he'd never shared his number.

Ashamed, he closes the text. He doesn't want to respond by asking who it is, because he'll feel like a jerk if it's someone he'd actually shared his number with. Perhaps he'll remember once his head clears up.He's relieved to see no messages or calls from his dad. He must be passed out drunk or at work. He also can't remember if his dad was scheduled to work today. For having such a shit memory, he sure remembers the previous night with agonizing clarity, though the persistent ache between his legs is a constant reminder.

He decides to call Beverly since she just got her license. He's sure she'll come pick him up. He feels gross, the only thing he wants to do is shower, scrub his skin to get the feeling of sex off his body. His hands shake as he dials her number. She answers on the second ring.

"Will!" She exclaims through the speaker.

She starts speaking really fast and he only catches a few words before stopping her, "Can you come pick me up?"

"Yeah… yeah, sure. Where are you?"

He spouts off the street he's on and the nearest cross street. She says she'll be there in 10 minutes, so he ends the call and waits for her arrival. He nervously glances around every couple of minutes, worried he's going to see Francis' mustang, but he never does. *The asshole is probably still passed out from the cocktail of drugs and alcohol he consumed last night,* Will thinks. Even if Francis was awake, he probably wouldn't bother going to look for him. Not after last night and Will's apparent inability to fuck.

Seeing Beverly's car pull up makes him calm down, the anxiety attack bubbling just beneath his skin assuaged for the time being. She gets out and looks at him with a frown and her hands on her hips. He wonders if he looks as bad as he feels.

"You look like shit," She says, answering the question he hadn't asked.

"Thanks Bev," He huffs out a laugh and stands.

Getting into the passenger's seat, he realizes he really doesn't know what to say. He sits quietly instead, looking down at his feet resting in the floorboard. He doesn't know the extent of what she knows about him, but he knows he should tell her everything, as if it's payment for a debt he's acquired by having her pick him up.

"So what happened with Francis?"

"What do you know?"

"I know that he told all of his friends that you're actually a girl—and that he's pissed you lied to him." She says, hating that she's saying the words out loud. "I know you're not a girl, though. He's just an asshole."

“I would have told him given the time. But he wanted to have sex and really didn’t seem to want to take no for an answer.” Will says, voice cracking.

“Did you guys…?”

“No. He tried. *Fuck* , did he try. But it wouldn’t, uh, you know… go in. Like it wouldn’t fit or something.” His face reddens at the admission.

He feels like he’s done something wrong. A mixture of shame and guilt hang over his head like a dark cloud threatening to drown him in rainwater. He feels so stupid for thinking Francis seemed like a nice guy, that he actually cared about Will. He should have trusted his initial judgment, then he wouldn’t be in this mess.

“I’m sorry, dude. That sucks.” Beverly says, frowning.

“I don’t know how I’m going to show my face at school on Monday.” He laments.

“It’ll be alright. Not everyone is like Francis. Most of us aren’t transphobic asshats.”

No, but enough of them are to make him afraid for his safety, he thinks. He knows the statistics, knows that being trans makes him more likely to be physically assaulted and harassed. He also knows being transgender makes him statistically more likely to attempt or complete suicide. He’s under no illusions that he’s safe at this school or in this town.

They go to Beverly’s house and he is awed immediately by how friendly her parents are. All Beverly had told them about him is that he’s a friend going through a tough time, and here they are welcoming him with open arms. They offer him some breakfast, though he declines, still feeling nauseous from his entire ordeal. What he’d really like to do is go lie down somewhere and forget about everything. He doesn’t allow himself to entertain the more harmful thoughts in his head—like how he’d be better off if he were dead. His dad would be happier too if he no longer had to worry about his mess of a son.

“We’re gonna go up to my room,” Beverly says, grabbing Will by the wrist and leading him upstairs.

She sits him down on her bed and starts looking him over. He watches her, confused.

“What… are you doing?” He asks.

“Are you hurt anywhere?” She replies, eyes still focused on their task.

“No, not really.” He answers, and it’s true. At most, there might be some light bruising littered along his torso and some minuscule tearing inside him, but otherwise, he feels physically alright.

“I’d love a shower, though.” He adds, laughing quietly.

“We should go to the hospital, get the evidence collected before you shower it away.” She says, tone serious.

“What? Why?”

“Francis *assaulted* you!”

“He didn’t… I mean, it didn’t actually *work* .”

“It doesn’t matter. It’s still assault.” Beverly replies.

“Well, he used a condom and didn’t even finish, so it’s not like there’ll be any… fluids.” He says the last word quietly, shame seeping into his tone.

“But we have other evidence. The messages he sent to everyone. I’ve even heard he took a *photo* .”

“Wait… *what* ?!” Will exclaims.

“Sorry… this isn’t how I’d planned to tell you. He took a photo of you while you were asleep and still undressed. He sent it to some of his friends and of course they shared it around.” She says, then adds “I haven’t seen it.”.

“That’s illegal.” Will says. “I’m under 18, it’s basically child porn.”

“You’re right. We could go to the cops for just that and he’d be put away for a long time. Odds are they wouldn’t even need you to talk about the assault.”

Will still cringes at the word assault. It didn’t actually happen in his head. Francis tried to fuck him but it didn’t work. It wasn’t assault or rape, it was just an attempt. *But if that’s true, why does he feel so messed up over it?* What he and Francis did feels wrong and *dirty* .

If he’d been raped, maybe he wouldn’t be angry at himself like he is now. Francis did say he had been leading him on, so maybe the whole thing really *is* his fault. He never should have gone over to Francis’ house, and he never should have willingly let himself be taken to the bedroom. He still feels like he can hear that stupid song in his head.

“I’m not going to the cops. We’re in the Bible Belt, they’re not going to care what happens to someone like me.” Will says.

“Alright, I’m not going to push you.” She concedes.

“Thanks, Bev.”

“You wanted to take a shower?” She asks.

“Yeah, but I don’t have any clothes.”

“I’ll see if I can swipe some from my brother. I think you’ll be close in size.”

“Thank you, again. For everything.”

“That’s what friends are for, right?”

Beverly returns with a T-shirt and a pair of sweatpants for him and shows him to the shower. Once the door is closed, he sheds off his clothes, getting a look at his body for the first time since this morning, and even then he hadn't really seen his body. He can't help but choke up at the sight - there are a few bruises along his torso as he'd expected, but what really gets to him is that he suddenly looks more feminine. His chest appears bigger than he remembers, his hips look wider, and shoulders are more narrow. His stomach is soft, and his jawline isn't well defined.

He hugs himself, digging his nails into the side of his arms and clawing down, leaving red streaks in their wake. He feels so *ugly* . His lashes look too long and almost seem to glisten from the tears threatening to fall from his eyes once more. It's been a very long time since he's felt this dysphoric. It hadn't even crossed his mind often since he'd begun HRT. He'd almost felt at peace with being AFAB, since he's been able to be himself in almost all aspects of his life. He should have known things would become complicated when relationships and sex were thrown into the mix. *He'd thought he had more time.*

"I need a haircut," He mumbles to himself, bringing a hand up to rake through the unruly locks.

Getting in the shower, the warm spray washes over him. The warmth slowly seeps in and heats the frigid temperature of his bones. Ever since last night, he'd felt a bone deep ache, a coldness—that no matter what the temperature actually is, he will always be freezing. He shivers underneath the spray, just thinking about it. It's because when Francis bared him entirely, it felt like he'd taken away layers of his skin, too. He'd been left less whole than he was before.

Chapter 5

Monday comes far too quickly, and Will dreads walking through the double doors to school. He doesn't know what awaits him and the more he thinks about it, the less he wants to find out. As he comes into the main corridor, he feels the stares on him, even though he keeps his gaze firmly on the floor in front of him. He doesn't know how many people heard his secret, but even just one is too many.

"Will!" Beverly calls out, making him look up for the first time.

She smiles warmly at him, beckoning him over towards her. He joins her over by a large window, and sits on the ledge. He doesn't speak, doesn't have to. Beverly is intuitive and it definitely helps that she knows the whole situation. She places a soft hand on his shoulder, offering a modicum of comfort. More than he's gotten since he'd gone with her to her parents' house on Saturday. Thankfully, when he got home, his dad was at work and seemed to be none the wiser on what had happened to him.

She's more aware of the stares from other kids than Will is, though it's likely because he keeps his gaze down unless absolutely necessary. She wants to yell at them, to tell them to stop gawking at Will, that he's just like everyone else. But the fact of the matter is—he isn't. He's different. Most kids only have an idle curiosity about him, but there are others who will hate him for just existing. Then, there are a few like Beverly, who don't seem to mind that he's different. That actually do want to be his friend.

Will thinks again about the text he'd received from the unknown number seemingly offering comfort or friendship, even. He wants to respond, but doesn't know what to say. He wonders if he should tell Beverly, but decides against it. What if it's not even a student? He'd gotten some rather inappropriate messages from adult men since Saturday. One had even sent him nude photos, making Will's stomach turn and threaten to spill the meager contents inside. Perhaps this texter is smarter, and is trying to lull him into a false sense of security.

The text seems genuine, though. And to add, there hasn't been another. So whoever it is isn't very pushy. Maybe they really do just want to befriend him. He pulls out his seldom used phone to read the text again. He'd done it multiple times, clinging to it like some kind of lifeline, even if it is just words on a screen.

'Hey, I know what it's like to feel like you don't belong. If you ever want to talk, I'll listen.'

He reads the text again, then once more. He wants to reply, but still isn't sure what to say. But he's typing out a response, the words appearing on the screen in front of him as if his hands aren't his own.

'What do you mean you know what it's like?'

He sends the message, waits for it to say delivered and pockets his phone once again.

"Who're you texting?" Beverly asks.

“I don’t actually know.” Will replies.

“A secret admirer?” She guesses.

Will huffs a laugh, “Maybe.”

Biology passes in a haze, and Will floats through the day more dissociated than usual. He remains mostly unaware of the stares thrown his way, and he doesn’t even see Francis at school. He’s more than ready for the day to be over, but it isn’t. He considers skipping art class and the rest of the day but decides not to since he has an appointment with Dr. Bloom during gym class. At least he won’t have to change in the locker rooms today.

“Hello, Will.” Hannibal greets as he strolls into art class five minutes late.

The teacher admonishes him but he flashes her one of his dazzling smiles and she smiles in return. Will wonders what it would be like to have that much charm. Art class is quickly becoming his favorite class of the day. The students here are laid back and most of them seem more ‘alt’ than the rest of the school. Nobody gives him sidelong glances or whisper about him behind his back, and he finds he enjoys sharing a table with Hannibal. The boy doesn’t talk often, but when he does his accent is almost soothing. Will likes hearing it more than he probably should.

“Hey,” Will replies as Hannibal takes his seat.

“How are you doing?” Hannibal asks.

Of course he knows what happened. Will is pretty sure the entire school knows by now. Though, Hannibal’s voice sounds genuine, as if he is truly inquiring about Will’s emotional state. Perhaps he is, or maybe he’s just really good at making himself sound sincere. Will sighs, cursing his brain for never letting him take things at face value.

He finally settles on, “I’ve been better.”

Will’s eyes venture up from his almost complete still life and he meets Hannibal’s gaze. He’d never held eye contact with the boy for this long, and he’s now noticing just how striking his eyes are. Dark brown, almost maroon in color at the center. It reminds him of blood, and the thought makes him shiver. Hannibal has always been kind to him, but Will can’t shake the feeling that there’s a darkness lingering below the depths of Hannibal’s eyes. As if he’s seen and done too many things to still be considered a kid. And oddly enough, it doesn’t scare him. He doesn’t find himself tearing his eyes away from Hannibal’s. Instead, he finds himself looking more intently, as if he’ll be able to find his answers inside the boy’s eyes.

Will finally looks away, and pulls his phone out to see if he’s gotten a reply from his mystery texter, but there’s nothing yet. There are a couple more lewd messages from other numbers he doesn’t recognize, though. He just does what he’s been doing and blocks each number and deletes the message. He laughs to himself when he thinks he might end up blocking the numbers of the entire student body sooner or later.

“Will, put your phone away.” The teacher calls out, making him jump and promptly drop his phone on the ground.

Before he can pick it up, Hannibal bends down to grab it. Will watches, and can’t help but notice a scar around Hannibal’s neck. He wants to reach out and touch it, to feel the smooth skin there, but he doesn’t. He also wants to ask how he got it, but he doesn’t do that, either.

“Thank you,” Will says when Hannibal hands him the phone.

He slides it into his pocket and resolves not to look at it again during class. He knows his instructor is within her right to take it away if she wants, so he doesn’t want to give her another reason to do so. At the end of the class period, Will goes to the gym to make sure Coach Crawford is aware of his appointment with Dr. Bloom.

“Hi, um, I’m just reminding you I have an appointment with Dr. Bloom today and won’t be in class,” He says awkwardly standing inside Coach Crawford’s door.

“Go get your head screwed on straight,” He replies gruffly.

Will nods, leaving the office and heads towards the administrative part of the school. He sits in the small waiting area until he hears Dr. Bloom’s door open. Another student comes out, and for a moment, Will thinks it might be Hannibal, but it isn’t. He’s surprised at the feeling akin to disappointment that passes over him.

“Come on in, Will.” Dr. Bloom says.

Will gets up, walking into the room and sitting on the couch that threatens to swallow him whole. He always feels much smaller than he is in rooms like this. Both smaller and childlike, feeling as if the weight of the room itself threatens to suffocate him. It fills him with a sense of urgency, an urgency to leave, to run away from here as quickly as possible. But, instead, he remains seated, his legs like cinderblocks.

“Do you have anything you’d like to talk about, Will?” Dr. Bloom asks gently.

“I…” Will starts, “What have you heard?”

“I won’t lie—I’ve heard some things, but we’ll only talk about what you want to talk about.”

“Everyone knows my secret now. And they think I’m a freak—and a liar, apparently.”

“I imagine that is quite scary. But do you really think *everyone* believes you to be a freak?”

“I… guess not everyone, but enough of them do.” Will answers.

Dr. Bloom purses her lips as if preparing what she’s going to say next. Will looks at his feet, and hears his phone vibrate with a text. A jolt of anticipation goes through him—*what if it’s his mystery texter?* He resists the urge to pull his phone out.

“Have you had any thoughts of hurting yourself?”

Will laughs dryly, “Haven’t I been hurt enough?”.

He immediately regrets saying it, because Dr. Bloom looks to him expectantly, and asks, “What do you mean?”.

He means that there’s still an ache between his legs, and he still feels disgusted with himself in ways he hadn’t felt in a long time, he means that he *trusted* Francis. He means that he hurts —bone deep into his soul. He *aches*. He doesn’t tell any of that to Dr. Bloom, though. She wouldn’t understand. Maybe she’d be like Beverly and *insist* Francis broke the law—that what he did was truly an assault. Maybe she’d tell him it wasn’t his fault.

“Forget about it. I’ve had a rough day, alright?” He says, hoping that’ll be the end of it.

“No, no. Tell me about it. I can’t help you if you won’t talk to me.” She implores.

He knows she could threaten to tell his father, and she’d be well within her rights to do so. He is a minor, after all. He bites his lip, trying to weigh the pros and the cons of actually being honest with her. Maybe she really does just want to help.

“I thought I had a boyfriend.” He says. “But I was wrong, I guess.”

He recounts how he and Francis met, how they spoke, then how he went to his house on Friday night. He doesn’t tell her his name, but she probably already knows. Everyone knows.

“What happened when you went to his house?”

“You won’t tell my father, right?”

“As long as you aren’t a danger to yourself or others, no. What you say in here stays between us.”

So Will takes a deep breath, and recounts what happened at Francis’ house. He tells her in a vague way, but it’s enough to make him feel like he’s suffocating, to feel the tears threaten to flow from his eyes. It makes him feel weak, *vulnerable*.

He tells her in a way that makes it sound like he was entirely on board with sleeping with Francis, but it’s obvious she sees right through him. He knows he’s not being convincing, but telling it how it actually happened feels too much like admitting to a crime. He even wonders if maybe he made it up somehow, maybe he’s even lying to himself. *What if he’s so messed up because he just regrets getting into bed with someone so soon?*

He looks down, paying attention to the way the tremors work through his hands and he wishes they’d *stop*. He wants it all to *stop*. Like someone was listening to him, the bell rings. Signaling the end of the school day, and the end of his appointment.

“Next week, same time?” Dr. Bloom asks, to which Will nods.

As he’s walking outside, he sees Francis for the first time since the weekend. He looks no worse for wear, as if nothing of import has happened to him. He’s not changed, he’s no different than he remembers him. *How is it fair that he’s so okay and Will is barely holding it*

together? He shakes his head, scoffing at the thought. Nothing in life is fair. If life were fair, his mother wouldn't have left, his dad wouldn't be an alcoholic, and he would've been born in the right body. He grips his backpack tightly, and unconsciously grits his teeth as he waits for his dad to pull up.

Belatedly, he remembers he'd gotten a text while in Dr. Bloom's office, so he pulls out his phone to look. Immediately, he knows it's the reply he was waiting for. It's his mystery texter, or as Bev put it his '*secret admirer*'. He smiles, hearing her voice say that in his head. He reads the text, and he furrows his brow.

'This isn't about me, but I will divulge all of my secrets to you in time, if you so wish. Right now, all I want is to extend an offer of friendship, Will.'

He types out a response quickly, *'Who are you?'*

'That, I will also share with you in time.'

Will wonders who he might be. Does he even go to this school? What if he's an adult? Why does he text like that? So… *proper*, well thought out, not like other kids he's texted, but not like any adult he's ever texted, either. Not that he's texted too many people, kids or adults.

Chapter 6

“Please, stop!” Will begs, trying to move but his limbs won’t work.

Francis’ face twists into an inhuman smile, horns protrude from his head and large red wings fan out behind his back. His hands have sharp claws where his fingernails should be, and he’s digging them into Will’s hips, drawing blood. Will whimpers, crying out again. But he’s entirely defenseless in stopping what he knows is going to happen.

The claws tear his jeans to shreds, leaving him bare. He feels icy air washing over him as he shivers. Looking down in abject terror, he watches as Francis’ smile reveals sharp incisors that look more like fangs. His tongue is long, red, and leaves his mouth searching.

He finds it, sinking his tongue inside Will’s hole, then lapping up the essence of him as he squirms uselessly. The monster between his legs devours him, forcing pleasure out of his body against his will. He groans, nausea, fear, and pleasure mixing together inside him. He feels his unwanted orgasm approaching, and he does his best to hold back, keeping the climax at bay. His hands uselessly grasping toward Francis to push him away, to stop the stimulation.

Just as he feels like he’s losing the battle, he jolts awake. His heart pounds in his chest and his T-shirt is soaked in sweat. He’s acutely aware of where else he’s *wet*, too. The realization of what he’d dreamt about hits him and his stomach turns. He stumbles out of bed, rushing to the bathroom where he vomits up little more than bile.

He changes his underwear, cleaning himself up as best he can. He hates the feeling of his arousal. Especially now. It feels so… *dirty*. *Wrong*. Like it’s evidence he actually enjoyed and wanted what Francis had done, both in his life and in his nightmare. Sometimes it’s hard to convince himself otherwise.

Even before he’d met Francis, he didn’t like the way it felt and wouldn’t touch himself often. Now, he hasn’t even considered it. He’s still sore and anytime he closes his eyes, he sees Francis. It isn’t very conducive to getting off. The dysphoria of chasing his release usually outweighed any pleasure he’d get from the act, anyway.

Will types out a message to his newfound friend after getting into dry clothes.

‘I keep having nightmares about him. In my dreams, he looks more like a monster than a boy.’

Almost immediately, a reply comes through.

‘The worst monsters are often human.’

He likes that his friend doesn’t seem to pity him. He talks to him, listens. He hasn’t become comfortable enough to divulge the entirety of what occurred with Francis, but he’s sure they’ve heard plenty if they go to the same school. And, they don’t seem pushy. They seem content with however fast Will wants to take things.

Another week passes, and Will heals physically. It's as if the entire ordeal never happened. Kids have also seemed to mostly move on and Francis hasn't been in school for the last few days. Will welcomes the break from him, glad to not be reminded of things every time he walks down the hallway.

He does still think about Francis often and has been plagued with nightmares since the incident. He begins to confide in his mystery texter, finding his texts to be the highlight of his mostly monotonous days. Whoever it is still hasn't revealed themselves, and Will finds his curiosity now bordering on unbearable.

'Will you tell me who you are?'

'Soon. Perhaps we can meet up after school?'

The idea of meeting a stranger makes Will nervous, but whether it's his curiosity or a startling lack of self preservation, he agrees.

'Today? Behind the bleachers?' Will suggests.

At least the location won't be overly secluded. It's only a false sense of security though, given all the things that occur even within the walls of the school. It's rare for the place to go a week without someone getting busted for drugs or starting a fight in the hallways. There had even been bomb threats called in last year, or so Will had heard.

'It's a date.'

A date?! He'd enjoyed speaking to this person, but never considered he would like Will like *that*.

The school day crawls by, though he always enjoys biology with Beverly and likes to see Hannibal in art class. He's not sure if he would consider Hannibal his friend, but the boy's presence makes his insides go *soft*. Perhaps it's just a crush, and crushes have never ended well for him. Though he doesn't think anything could be worse after Francis.

He doesn't have an appointment with Dr. Bloom today so he has to go to gym class. The pit in his stomach gets more pronounced the closer he gets to the locker room. He often feels like that's really where things began going down hill. Francis isn't there when he arrives, and he thinks he's in the clear. But, at the end of the period, Francis, Matthew, and Frederick are waiting for him as he comes out of the locker room.

"We haven't talked since you came over last week. Why is that?" Francis asks.

"I—you," Will stutters, feeling backed into a corner. "I don't want to see you anymore."

"Aw, why not, *liar*?" Francis coos.

Will wants to leave, but Francis and his goons are between him and the exit, so he's stuck. He doesn't know what to say, doesn't know if there's anything he can say. Francis is going to do whatever it is he intends to do, and judging by the looks on his friends' faces, they want to help.

“Y’know, when Francis told us you were really a girl, I was so curious.” Frederick says.

“Right? You don’t look like a girl—hell, you even have some facial hair growing in!” Matthew adds.

If they really cared, he could explain to them why he looks the way he does. Puberty blockers and testosterone make a world of difference. He could tell them he’s not a girl and never has been, that the outward anatomy you’re born with doesn’t always align with your actual identity. But that doesn’t matter. He’s different, *other*. And they don’t like that.

“Show us what’s really in your pants, Graham.”

Cornered, breathing erratically, Will backs himself into a corner like a pinned animal. Matthew grabs a fistful of his shirt and shoves him against the locker lined wall. His head ricochets back and hits the locker hard, making a loud thud ring throughout the room and throughout his head. He feels hands on his belt, working to unbuckle it. His own hands tremble as he grabs for them in an effort to stop them.

But he’s outnumbered. They’re stronger than him and he stands no chance. They could kill him if they wanted to and he couldn’t do a thing to stop it. He feels so *hopeless*, and finds himself going limp in their hands. *If he just lets them do whatever it is they want to do, maybe he won’t get hurt too badly*, he reasons.

Frederick pulls the belt from its loops and holds the soft, worn leather in his hands. The belt is probably older than Will is. He’d found it at a thrift store last year and bought it for less than a dollar. It’d quickly become his favorite belt and the only one he wore. Numbly, he hopes they leave it for him. He doesn’t want to lose it.

He renews his struggled when the hands on him go for the button of his jeans. His legs kick out, searching for contact. He snarls, his teeth ready to bite into anyone who gets close enough. He feels more like a rabid animal now, with an overdrive of fear and adrenaline coursing through him. Seeing an opportunity, he bites down hard on Matthew’s forearm, his teeth digging into the flesh, feeling it give way and allow the cloying taste of blood to fill his mouth.

“What the fuck!” Matthew growls, rearing back from Will and freeing his now bleeding arm.

Frederick punches Will in the face, hitting him square in the nose. Now, his own blood is flooding his senses. He lashes out in a blind rage, punches Frederick hard in the throat, making him wheeze and couch as he struggles to breathe. Matthew and Frederick are closer in age and size to Will, so the idea that he could take them in a fight isn’t an improbable one. Francis, on the other hand, is much larger and quite a bit older, so when he steps forward from where he’d been watching, Will has to fight the urge to cower.

Francis’ large hand grips Will by the throat and lifts him up almost effortlessly, as Will struggles to free himself from the hand. He digs his nails into it and scratches down as hard as he can, but it doesn’t phase his assailant.

“You know, I could kill you. Snuff you out like putting out a match. You’re like an insect. A disgusting pest one would be better off rid of.” Francis growls.

Will continues struggling, feeling himself get lightheaded as his brain screams for oxygen. He doesn’t want to die like this, he can’t. But he’s entirely at his mercy, and Francis doesn’t seem to have much in the way of mercy. He wonders if Francis is right. *Is he a pest? Would everyone be better off without him?* He thinks about it sluggishly, feeling his brain get fuzzier.

Finally, just as he thinks he’s going to lose consciousness, he’s dropped to the ground where he lands hard on his knees. The jolt of pain makes him gasp for air and his brain becomes clear once again, though he almost prefers the fuzziness that came with the lack of oxygen. He hears his belt crack in Frederick’s hands again, and he wonders if they intend to hit him with it.

And then, his question is answered when the buckle of the belt comes down and hits him hard on the thigh. Frederick hits him again, and again first on his thighs, then on his sides. Will cowers, covering his head with his arms and inadvertently exposing the skin of his back. He regrets it when he feels the leather bite into the flesh there. The blows rain down on his back until it’s on fire. He must be bleeding since some of the hits were with the belt buckle. Then, he hears the belt clink onto the tile floor, and footsteps retreat.

“We’re not finished with you.” Francis calls out as he and his friends leave.

Will stays on the floor for a few minutes, doing his best to hold himself together. He cries, not from the physical pain, though it is on just the other side of unbearable, but from the humiliation. They seem to know exactly what to do and say to make him feel so weak, so *inadequate*.

“Fuck!” He belatedly remembers he’s supposed to be meeting his mystery texter *right now*.

He gets up, grabbing his belt and ignoring the protests from his body and all but runs to his locker to grab his backpack before heading out the side entrance of the school toward the bleachers. He hopes they haven’t left yet. He need *something* to go well today.

He wipes at the blood drying from his nose and gets most of it off, but he knows he must look like a mess. That alone should be enough for him to postpone, but he can’t bring himself to do so. Instead, he continues his trek to meet the person who has easily been the highlight of his day for the last week.

He nervously approaches the meeting spot and he sees the back of a boy standing there. He’s got a cigarette in his hand, and he seems completely relaxed. Will looks on for a moment, in an attempt to figure out who it is before he sees his face, but he can’t. They’re wearing a hat and it’s concealing the color of their hair.

Getting closer, he feels nervous—almost wishing he’d just turn around and walk away. *As long as his newfound friend is shrouded in mystery, he can’t fuck it up, right?* But it’s too late now, because the boy turns around and their eyes meet for the first time—well, not exactly the first time.

"Hannibal?" Will all but gasps. "It was you… the whole time?"

"Yes. I was quite worried you would no longer speak to me if you knew." Hannibal replies solemnly.

"Why would you think that?" Will asks.

"You didn't seem to like talking to me very much in class."

"I'm not—I'm not good at talking. Not face to face."

"So I've gathered. Though you're nearly verbose through text," Hannibal smiles, stepping closer.

He puts out his cigarette, and invades Will's personal space. He can feel the warmth of his breath against his cheek and it makes Will blush. His disheveled state almost entirely forgotten, with his senses being assuaged by everything Hannibal. They'd never been *this close* before.

"Who did this to you?" Hannibal asks, hand coming up to caress Will's face.

Will can't contain the flinch at the contact, his body becoming so used to expecting pain when touched. Hannibal's hand is warm, not pressing and not painful. Will sighs, relaxing into the touch and feels the warmth growing in his chest. If he was in his right mind, he'd probably be embarrassed by his physical reaction.

"Well?" Hannibal prods.

"I think you know, Hannibal." He replies, meeting Hannibal's gaze. "It was Francis and his friends."

"I'll kill them." He says, tone so serious Will almost believes him.

When Hannibal's hand falls from his face and rests at his side once more, Will almost leans forward to chase the contact he'd been desperately craving. He hadn't realized just how touch starved he was until this moment. He'd spent a lot of his life afraid for people to touch him, and it's not like his father touched him very often. He doesn't even remember the last time they'd hugged.

"We need to tend to your wounds. You're bleeding, Will."

Will looks down, he is bleeding. The belt wound on his thigh is forming a dark stain on the leg of his jeans. The hits on his back are probably bleeding too. He shivers, suddenly very aware of all the aches on his body and he stumbles but Hannibal rushes over to steady him before he can fall.

"Thanks," He replies.

He sends his father a quick text to let him know he'll be late coming home and he hopes he won't be coming back to a punishment when he does. He can't take another beating right

now. Instead of worrying further about that, he tosses his phone into his bag and Hannibal leads him to the parking lot where his car waits. Hissing as he slides into the passenger seat, he buckles and watches out the window as they drive away. He hadn't even asked where Hannibal lives, so he has no idea where they might be going. He belatedly realizes he'd just blindly trusted this boy, all caution thrown out the window because he recognized him and he seemed kind. Be he'd thought Francis was kind at first, too. And he was very wrong about that.

Chapter 7

Hannibal's home is large, almost too large. Will feels like the building towers over him as he steps out of the car to follow him inside. Of course, the inside has a similar feel. Marble floors and a grand staircase greet him as he walks in. It's like a mansion, nicer than any house he's ever seen. But feels empty, more like a house and not a home.

"Wow," He breathes quietly.

"I know, it's a bit… *extra*."

"Where's your family?"

"I live with my uncle's wife, Lady Murasaki."

"And your uncle?" Will asks.

"He's dead. Heart attack a couple of years ago." Hannibal replies.

He follows Hannibal upstairs into his room. It has more of a homey feel, with posters on the walls, a bed neatly made with a dark red comforter, a desk with a laptop, and a large bookshelf filled almost entirely with books. There's also a nice TV mounted on the wall.

"Please, sit. I'll get the first aid kit and tend to your injuries." Hannibal says, motioning to the bed.

Will obeys without a word. He sits uncomfortably on the bed, immediately feeling like all he wants to do is lie down on the soft mattress and wrap himself in the fluffy comforter. He stays seated, swinging his legs back and forth nervously as he waits for Hannibal's return.

"Where else are you hurt?" Hannibal asks, kneeling in front of Will.

"I… my thighs, and my back."

"Do you feel comfortable removing your shirt for me?"

Will shakes his head, but proceeds with removing the clothing anyway with shaking hands. He turns to reveal his back, where there are a few cuts from the belt buckle bleeding sluggishly, and red, raised welts. Will hears Hannibal's sharp intake of breath at the damage, and he resists the urge to apologize. *He's such a mess*, he thinks miserably.

"This isn't too bad. I'll just clean them and bandage them up, alright?" Hannibal says, looking for permission.

"Okay."

Will remains still and quiet as Hannibal dabs alcohol onto the cuts. It burns, but it's nothing new for him. He'd often cleaned his self inflicted wounds with alcohol to make himself feel

something more after he'd finished cutting himself. But knowing someone else is taking care of him, for once, is almost unbelievable. Up until now, here with Hannibal, he'd always taken care of himself. He was not very good at it, but he was all he had.

"These are done. You said you have some on your thighs too?"

Will nods. He's not sure if he can make himself take his pants off in the presence of another. Just the thought of it makes him ill. His hands clinch the fabric of his jeans, and he feels the start of a panic attack brewing just beneath his skin. But he closes his eyes, steeling himself to take off his pants.

With trembling hands, he unbuckles his belt and pops the button on his jeans. He pulls the zipper down, then pulls the pants down just enough to expose the wound there and leaves his boxers in place. He feels a warm hand on the skin of his thigh and he shudders at the contact, reminded once again just how touch starved he is. How much he aches for a touch that doesn't burn him.

"Is—is this good enough?" Will asks nervously.

"Yes, I can access the wound to clean it like this. I'm going to begin now."

Thankfully, Hannibal doesn't mention the obviously self-inflicted wounds on his thigh. They don't require treatment, because they're old and almost entirely scarred over now. But he still feels immense shame whenever someone sees them. He knows he shouldn't hurt himself when things become too much, but that never seems to matter in the moment.

Keeping his eyes clenched tightly shut, he feels the steady hands clean and then bandage his wound. Once complete, he pulls his jeans back up his legs and buckles his belt, feeling protected once again. But the more time he spends in Hannibal's presence, the less he feels like he actually needs to be on guard. His brain has quieted, the anxiety that's always bubbling just beneath his skin isn't as pronounced. He doesn't feel like any little thing will send him head first into a panic attack. *That* thought makes him nervous, though. He doesn't want to place that much trust in someone he's only really beginning to know.

"Where'd you go just now?" Hannibal asks, still kneeling.

"Just thinking." Will replies.

Hannibal purses his lips, obviously waiting for Will to elaborate, but he doesn't. He stands, cleaning up the bloody gauze and packing away the first aid kit. He leaves Will once more to put the kit away, and Will waits nervously still sitting on his bed. Hannibal returns quickly and sits next to Will on the bed.

"How'd you get my number?" Will asks.

"Your social media isn't as private as it should be."

"Oh," Will replies, blushing.

He hadn't dared look at his social media since he'd been outed by Francis. He's sure it's filled with posts and comments from people who hate him now. Maybe it's empty. Maybe nobody actually cares enough to harass him there. He doesn't have the energy to find out. Not now, anyway.

"You going to tell me what you meant in your first text? How do you know what it's like to feel like you don't belong?"

"I am an orphan. I spent time in a Lithuanian orphanage until my uncle found me a couple of years ago. Before that, I was mute." Hannibal explains.

"Oh, wow. I'm sorry."

Will watches Hannibal's gaze change, as if he's somewhere else entirely. No longer in front of Will. His hand mindlessly ventures up and touches the scar on his neck.

"How did you get the scar?" Will asks.

"Before I was taken to the orphanage, I was held captive along with my sister by several men who escaped military service in Russia. It was winter, my parents had just died from a bad flu epidemic and we were alone. The men, they murdered my sister and kept me captive for weeks. When I'd eventually gotten away from them, I still had chains around my neck and they'd rubbed the skin raw. I don't recall much from that time, but I was told it was a bad wound and infected. That's why it scarred the way it did."

Will looks over at him, a pang of sorrow in his chest for the child Hannibal never got to be. He'd thought his life was bad, but it was nothing compared to his.

"You can't compare our lives. Suffering is still suffering regardless of anyone else's experiences." Hannibal says, seeing the sadness on Will's face.

"My childhood was… bad. But I was never *assaulted* as you were." Hannibal continues.

Will doesn't like that word. It's too close to what really happened. He was sexually assaulted, almost *raped*. He's part of a statistic now. A number. Though he's likely part of a much larger number, since many victims—*survivors*, he corrects to himself, don't actually report their assaults to the police. Much like him. He still could, though. There is some evidence. There are photos. Texts that were exchanged. Maybe Francis would go to jail.

"Hey, stay with me." Hannibal says, pulling Will from his thoughts.

"I'm here." He answers.

With Will sufficiently patched up, Hannibal isn't sure what to do now. A feeling he rarely deals with. He prides himself on always being able to think on his feet—to figure out what is going to happen next. But here he is with Will Graham in his bedroom, and he's at a complete loss for words.

Will bites his lip. He likes Hannibal. He wonders what it would be like to kiss him. But he doesn't even *know* if Hannibal is gay. Or if he'd be okay with who Will is. He also thinks that

perhaps it's too soon, that maybe he isn't supposed to be feeling this way so soon after an assault. He sharply intakes a breath when a warm hand is placed on the side of his face, not expecting Hannibal to touch him in such a way.

"I'd like to kiss you," Will blurts out.

Hannibal smiles, "Then kiss me."

And Will does. Leaning in, Hannibal meets him halfway. Their lips meet and it's *perfect*. It's so unlike any other kiss he's ever shared with anyone. He finds himself aching for more of Hannibal.

Breaking the kiss, Will pulls back, lips swollen and red, face flushed. He holds eye contact with Hannibal who is similarly disheveled. He breathes heavily, catching his breath. What he's feeling is arousal, burning through him like white hot fire. The pleasant ache in his abdomen distracts him, and it quickly becomes nauseating. He imagines trying to sleep with Hannibal, and the thought alone makes him want to panic—to get up and leave. Memories of Francis invading his mind like a parasite.

He unconsciously squeezes his legs together, whether for the sensation it brings or out of discomfort, he's not sure. And it doesn't matter. He can't act on these desires. For all he knows it's simply a reaction to being cared for—not a genuine feeling of attraction.

Hannibal had been similarly effected, unbeknownst to Will. Even as a teenage boy, he doesn't find himself dealing with arousal often. Perhaps as a response to his own trauma or something else—but he feels it now. Will is exquisite, and Hannibal wants nothing more than to take him apart. To open him up and taste him, to tell him how gorgeous he is. His mouth goes dry with desire, and his cock is achingly hard.

Somewhat ashamed for being so affected by a simple kiss, he hopes Will doesn't notice. And he doesn't. He's too caught up in his own arousal.

Will feels too hot, as if he is going to start boiling. He'd thought the arousal would subside as they sit next to each other, close but not touching. He was wrong. He finds himself resisting the urge to reach out and touch again. To feel the warmth of Hannibal's body against his own.

His fear, something he doesn't want to discuss with Hannibal since they've only just formally met, is that if he initiates something and finds he's not ready that Hannibal would keep going. Like Francis. But Hannibal isn't Francis. He wouldn't do that. But Will doesn't know that. He realizes again that he barely knows Hannibal.

He squeezes his eyes shut, willing the thoughts of Francis away, and instead does something he'd been aching for. He leans in and pulls Hannibal into a hug. The other boy immediately reciprocates, holding tightly, but mindful of Will's injuries. The once painful injuries that have all but been forgotten here in Hannibal's arms.

Will sighs, feeling the tension seep from his body. He often can't tolerate prolonged touch like this, but that leaves him starved for it. Starved for something he can't tolerate in some

kind of sick irony. He sometimes wonders what he did so wrong to be punished by the universe *so much.*

The little bubble of contentedness he's created with Hannibal pops when his phone begins to vibrate. He breaks the hug, frowning when he sees it's his father calling him. The anxiety hits him in full force. Though his dad has never injured him too badly, he still can't help but feel fear toward the man.

"I have to go," Will says quietly.

It's late and his father is probably pissed off that Will isn't there. He had some chores he was supposed to get done, but of course those plans got derailed when he got cornered in the locker room and beat to shit. But he's sure his dad doesn't want to hear excuses. Grabbing his things, he rushes quickly from Hannibal's room, uttering a goodbye and is out the front door before the other boy can even respond.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Where the hell have you been?” Will’s father yells when he hears the front door creak open.

Will sighs, putting his bag down and heads into the kitchen.

“I sent you a text. I said I was going to a friend’s.” Will answers.

“What friend? I wasn’t aware you had any friends.” His father says, vitriol in his voice.

“And what the fuck happened to you?” He adds when he turns around and sees Will’s injured state.

“I—it’s nothing.” Will answers unconvincingly.

His father approaches rapidly, large hands roughly grabbing his face. Will winces at the contact on his sore face. He risks a glance at the man’s eyes, immediately regretting it, seeing the anger there.

“I don’t ask much of you, Will. Keep your head down, don’t bring attention to this family, and do the chores I ask you to do!”

Will swallows thickly. Wondering if what happened with Francis has gotten back to his father yet. He doesn’t think so—his dad would definitely have mentioned it. The hand lets go of his face, and he backs up instinctively.

“I’ve heard somethin’ else. But I didn’t want to believe it.” His dad says.

Will immediately pales. *He knows* , he thinks. He waits for his dad to elaborate, but the look on his face morphs into something almost akin to sympathy. He wasn’t aware his father was capable of such an emotion.

“At work, they were talking ‘bout this girl who was pretending to be a boy.” He says pointedly. “I didn’t think it could be you, but now I’m questioning it.”

Will frowns. He could lie, say it wasn’t him. But he doesn’t think his dad would buy it. He wouldn’t mention it if he hadn’t already made up his mind that it was Will they were talking about.

“I thought—I thought he *liked* me.” Will says miserably.

“You have to be more careful, son.”

Will feels flayed open, like all his nerve endings are exposed and someone is prodding at them. His heart feels like it’s being gripped inside his chest, and he heaves out a broken sob.

He hadn't wanted to cry, not in front of his dad, but it's just *too much* . He half expects his dad to turn and walk away, or keep yelling at him. What he doesn't expect is for his father's arms to envelope him in a hug.

His dad smells of motor oil and faintly of whiskey, but he eases into the embrace anyway. It's a rare show of affection from the man, and Will isn't sure what else to do. He keeps crying, numbly thinking he's getting snot and tears on his dad's shirt, but he finds he doesn't care. He's being held tightly, and eventually, he sags in the hold, the tension slowly creeping from his muscles.

"I really don't want to uproot you again, but I need your help with that."

Will nods into his chest. He understands, he does, but he also yearns for a normal life. One where he has friends and a *boyfriend* that actually likes him. It shouldn't be this hard to be *normal* . He'd also like a father who isn't unpredictable. His dad is alright right now, because he isn't drunk, but he has no idea what he'll be like tomorrow. It's always a guessing game with him.

"I'm sorry, dad." Will replies, extracting himself from the hold.

"Did that boy also do this to you?" His dad asks regarding Will's injuries.

"Yes. Today, in the locker rooms."

"Do you want me to go up to the school tomorrow?"

"No, no. It's fine." Will answers, knowing getting his father involved would likely make things worse.

"Alright…" His dad says, then turns grabbing a bag off the table. "I picked up your medicine today,"

Will reaches out and takes the bag. His dad used to help him with the injections, but after the first few, Will got the hang of it and began doing them himself. He prefers it that way, since they're best given in the hip. He knows it's his dad, and he's been in more states of undress in front of him, but it still makes him uncomfortable. Not to mention the self harm scars littering his thighs and hips. His dad thinks he stopped hurting himself months ago.

"I'll do this and my homework and come down to do the chores, if that's alright?" Will asks before turning.

His dad nods and he goes up to his bedroom. Having been confronted by his father as soon as he got home, he never got the chance to think about the kiss with Hannibal. Hadn't even gotten the chance to think about Hannibal at all.

His homework consists only of a journal entry for his English class, and he finishes that quickly. He gives himself the injection, and throws the used needle into his sharps container and heads back down to get started on his chores. In the kitchen, he suppresses a groan at the amount of dishes that have seemingly piled up over night. He turns, seeing his dad in the

living room watching the game. He cringes seeing the bottle of whiskey next to him on the side table. He screams at the television. His team lost the game.

He's a different person when he drinks, and Will intends to be finished with this and in his bedroom before he's well and truly drunk. Doing the dishes too quickly, he loses his grip on the glass he's drying and it falls, shattering onto the kitchen floor. He cringes, freezing in place. He hears his father stand, his heavy footsteps making their way into the room, but it feels like he's under water. He knows his dad is saying something, but he can't make it out and he can't look at him.

"Are you listening to me?!" His dad shouts and he finally hears it.

"I'm sorry–what did you say?"

"Jesus fucking Christ. I try to be nice to you, to be understanding, and this is how you repay me?"

"I didn't mean to. It slipped." Will replies meekly.

But it doesn't matter that Will didn't mean to do it. His dad is drunk now, and that means he's not the person he was only an hour ago. He gets whiplash from the way his dad's moods change, though he should expect it by now, he thinks. He knows his dad is an alcoholic, knows he drinks to the point of advanced inebriation nearly every evening, and yet, he feels caught off guard every single time.

"I'm sick and tired of your goddamn excuses," His dad says, stepping closer.

Will only hears the blood rushing in his ears and the sound of boots crunching over glass. His gaze is fixed downward, on the dirty leather boots as his father stops in front of him. He hears the sound of a belt being unbuckled, and knows he can't take another beating. He *can't* .

As it turns out, he can. His dad turns him around so he's leaning over the kitchen counter and hits his back with the leather of the belt. Through the searing pain, he thinks *at least he isn't using the buckle* . It won't break the skin, it might bruise, but that's *fine* . His dad hits him so many times he loses count. The heat of the blows change and become almost cold, as if his nerve endings are too overstimulated and have just gone numb to it all.

Finally, his dad stops. And Will feels hollow. A deep ache worse than anything else he could ever feel. It's worse than he'd felt after his night with Francis. His dad is supposed to love him, supposed to take care of him, and yet he leaves Will with more bruises than he started the day with. He hates himself for loving his dad. It hurts. And he thinks he must love the idea of what his dad *could* be, rather than for what he is.

The wounds will heal, he'll be okay. Physically. He knows that. He's been on the receiving end of his dad's anger many times over the years. After so long, one would think they'd become desensitized to it, but it doesn't work that way. At least not for Will. He wonders if his father was like this before his mother left. He wonders if he'd turned out different if she'd taken him with her. He yearns for a life that isn't his, a family that isn't broken.

He cries quietly, despite his best efforts not to, sweeping up the broken glass on the floor. Once that's taken care of, he finishes the dishes, careful to not drop anything else. At some point, his dad had gone to his bedroom, leaving Will alone with his thoughts.

By the time he's done, it's late. He sighs, wiping the sweat from his brow and goes into his own bedroom. Stripping off his shirt, he grabs a towel and a change of clothes to take a shower. Once in the bathroom, he turns to get a look at his back. There's no broken skin as he suspected, but there are stripes of angry, red welts across his spine. All in all, it isn't that bad. His previous wounds seemed to have mostly been spared, too. He reaches around, removing the bandages Hannibal had placed earlier in the day. They have dried blood on them, but nothing fresh. He tosses them in the garbage and turns on the shower.

He looks at himself in the mirror, sees the changes the testosterone has made and it makes him happy. At least, somewhat. He still sees the parts of himself that don't exactly align with who he is. His chest is nearly flat, but he can't help but see the femininity in his breast tissue–and even his nipples. Unsure if that's all in his head, or a real thing other people experience, he shakes it off and turns on the shower.

Stepping under the spray, his teeth chatter as the water turns from icy to burning slowly. He could wait until the water was warm, but he never does. Choosing instead to get in and feel the way the temperature shifts. It grounds him.

He feels bad, and he wants it to stop. He thinks of Hannibal and the kiss they'd shared. It was so much better than he'd ever imagined it would be. Hannibal's lips were soft, and they fit against his own like they were made for each other. He wonders if Hannibal would like him–if he'd like what he sees underneath the layers.

Will gasps, the thoughts of Hannibal going straight to his groin. It's one thing nobody ever mentioned when he started HRT. The libido increase is at times annoying, other times it's nauseating. He'd acquainted himself with the detachable shower head at twelve, long before he'd started HRT, and it remains one of his best friends even at fifteen. He hadn't even attempted this–or any other kind of masturbation since Francis. He felt too disgusting–too ashamed to even entertain such thoughts.

But now, he's suppressing a moan, pressing his finger against his clit, rubbing in circles. His legs shake at the feeling. He grabs the shower head and changes the setting to the one he likes best, and uses it to get himself off. He comes embarrassingly quickly. Catching his breath, he replaces the shower head and washes himself off.

The sensation of cleaning himself off after orgasm isn't one he likes. There's a wetness there that feels *wrong* . He knows it isn't, knows that it's *normal* , but the consistency is one he hates. He isn't sure if the wrongness he feels is rooted in some kind of purity culture or if it's just a sensory thing, but it doesn't matter because sometimes he can barely stand to touch it.

Even worse than that is when he tries to finger himself. It always *hurts* , and the feeling is nearly unbearable, almost like nails on a chalkboard. The texture of the skin inside there isn't unlike the inside of his cheek and he'd tried telling himself that, but it didn't do a thing to help him with his aversion.

Finally dressed and ready for bed, he picks up his phone and sees a missed text from Hannibal. The other boy had sent it not long after he'd bolted out of his house.

'I hope I didn't cross any lines today.'

Will reads the message, confusion etched on his face. He initiated the kiss, not Hannibal. How could he have crossed a line? Nonetheless, he types out a response.

'I didn't do anything I didn't want to do. I'm sorry I left in such a rush.'

He's asleep as soon as his head hits the pillow.

Chapter End Notes

I'm finding it hard to update this story. Mostly because a lot of the things Will feels in this one are things I've felt as well. It's almost cathartic to write, but with that said, I end up needing breaks with this one.

Most of the other stuff I've written deal with a similar subject matter (non-con), but this one is unique in that it is closer to real life than any of the others are for me.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will awakens with a groan the next morning. His body is so sore, more sore than he'd realized last night. But it's to be expected. The altercation with Francis and his friends seems like weeks ago, and yet it was only just yesterday. Then, he'd been reacquainted with his father's favorite brand of punishment.

But he still counts himself lucky. He's certain his dad doesn't understand how important his medication is, and could see the man taking it away from him as some kind of punishment. He drags himself out of bed with clenched teeth and wants to fall right back down into the sheets. The ache he feels is bone deep.

Stiffly, he makes his way to his closet to get dressed. He opts for his usual ensemble, donning a white under shirt, a flannel shirt, and a pair of his most worn, soft jeans. Even with the soft fabric, it still rubs uncomfortably against his aching thighs. He wants to skip school today, but he knows he can't. If his dad finds out, and he has to face the man's wrath again, it might just break him. But who is he kidding? He's already broken. Shattered into a thousand little pieces like the glass he'd dropped the night before.

He combs through his hair with his fingers and brushes his teeth. Satisfied with his lackluster appearance, he heads out the door to walk to school. He gets down the block and a car slows beside him. At first he doesn't look, thinking it must be Francis or another of his cronies. But, curiosity gets the better of him so he looks. It's Hannibal. Once they make eye contact, the other boy stops his car, rolling down the window.

"Let me give you a ride," He says, voice like a balm to Will's wounds.

Even if he wanted, Will doesn't have it in him to argue. He climbs into the passenger seat, suppressing a hiss as he maneuvers his aching body. His ass is on *fire* from his father's punishment the previous night.

"Are you alright?" Hannibal asks.

"I'll be okay," Will answers through gritted teeth.

"What happened when you got home?"

"My dad, he uh, punished me."

"Why?"

He tells him, unaware of the way his father's treatment makes his blood boil. Though, the way his knuckles turn white as he grips the steering wheel with more force than necessary give his anger away. Will sees it, wondering what he's said to make the other boy angry.

“I’m sorry,” Will murmurs.

“For what?” Hannibal asks, confused.

“I don’t know… but you’re angry.”

Will’s used to being the cause of anger. Even when he doesn’t quite know why. From experience, apologizing makes things better for him. Begging for forgiveness on the other hand, tends to make things worse. His father doesn’t like when he does that.

“I’m angry with the way your father has treated you. I’m not upset with you.” Hannibal tells him.

The rest of the ride to school is quiet. Will is exhausted, and finds himself nodding off even though the drive lasts for only a few minutes. A hand on his shoulder startles him, and he wakes to find they’ve arrived.

Once inside, they reluctantly go their separate ways. Will wants to cling to Hannibal like a small child. The boy brings about a sense of safety he doesn’t usually feel. Not with his father, or any other authority figures. Instead of walking to his locker hunched over with his head down, he forces himself to stand up straight, and walks with his head up. His eyes don’t meet anyone else’s, but they aren’t pointed at the ground. That has to count for something.

The false bravado he carries himself with is extinguished immediately once he catches sight of Francis. Before he can turn and walk away, the boy sees him too and stalks over to him. He swallows thickly, his feet planted in place. He couldn't move now even if he tried.

His elbows press into his sides almost painfully, and his gaze settles on the floor. There’s no use in trying to conceal the way his body trembles. Francis is in his space now, and the scent of the boy assaults his nostrils. He shakes, and feels briefly that he may lose his bladder. He’d *never* live that down.

The boy is speaking to him, but he feels like his head is underwater. He doesn’t know why he’s feeling so afraid, given he wasn’t like this even as recently as yesterday. He supposes it’s because of his injuries, and while he was no match in the locker room, the odds are even more hopeless now. Francis can do whatever he wants with him and he’s powerless to stop it.

Francis presses him against the lockers, his hands gripping Will’s forearms. He leans in, licking a stripe up Will’s neck and tasting the salty sweat there. The boy groans, as if it’s the best thing he’s ever tasted.

“Fear tastes divine on you,” Francis purrs.

Those words cut through the fog of his mind, and it makes him angry. He feels it boiling just beneath his skin, and he lifts his chin, making eye contact with the taller boy currently pinning him to the lockers.

In an even tone, “I’d like it if you let me go, *now* ,” Will requests.

“And if I don’t want to?” Francis asks, smiling wolfishly.

Will smirks up at him, bringing his knee up and colliding hard with his groin. Francis howls in pain, releasing Will and clutching at himself. Will moves away, leaving the boy to suffer. He hopes Francis will think twice about approaching him again.

“Will!” Beverly calls out, having seen the end of the confrontation. “Way to stand up to him!”

He huffs a laugh, still working to calm the tremors in his hands.

“He should have considered his stance before cornering me like that. I only took the opening I was given.” Will tells her in lieu of a greeting.

“Damn,” Beverly replies, still smiling widely.

He appreciates that she doesn’t look at him any differently, even though she knows his secret. Though, he can’t really call it a secret anymore. Almost everyone knows. Surprisingly, nobody except Francis and his goons have bothered him past giving him strange looks and sidelong glances. He’d expected to be mercilessly harassed, given their location in the Bible Belt.

He and Beverly make their way to biology, and the class goes by quickly. It’s arguably one of his favorites, though now art is his favorite, given that’s where he sees Hannibal. He’s definitely falling for the boy, and it scares him. But, he’s been nothing but kind, so he pushes the worry aside.

During the break between some of his classes, he goes to the bathroom. He’d been doing his best to avoid it since he’d been outed, worrying that the boys would find it weird to share a bathroom with him. But the persistent, strengthening pressure on his bladder forces him to make a stop. He goes out of his way to the bathroom that is frequented the least.

Thankfully the bathroom is empty, so he goes into the stall and relieves himself quickly, washes his hands and heads toward art class. The bell rings as he makes his way to the arts hallway, and he’s going to be late. He dodges a bullet, slipping inside the room to see the teacher isn’t there yet. He takes his seat next to Hannibal, smiling at the boy as he does.

“I heard what happened with Francis, are you alright?” Hannibal whispers.

“You should be asking him that,” Will says, smirking.

Hannibal smiles at him, his face full of pride. He likes to see Will standing up for himself.

“I think we should teach you how to fight.”

“Do *you* know how to fight?”

“I do.”

Chapter End Notes

A short one... but I wanted to get some kind of update posted and it felt like this was a good stopping point for the chapter.

Chapter 10

“Is this a date? It feels like a date.” Will says, smiling like an idiot.

They’ve pulled into the parking lot of a nearby state park, and Will watches as Hannibal procures a picnic basket and blankets from the trunk of his car. He hadn’t known what to expect when Hannibal requested that he join him this morning, the other boy being incredibly vague with the details. His heart flutters at the prospect of having a picnic date with Hannibal.

“It is a date, but I have something else in mind too.” Hannibal says, matching Will’s smile.

“Oh?” Will asks, following the boy onto the meandering, narrow dirt path leading away from the parking area.

He reads the signpost, telling him they’re a half mile from the waterfall. Paying too much attention to the sign, he stumbles over a root spanning across the path, but he steadies himself and avoids a fall. Hannibal’s hand comes to brace Will’s arm, and he’s surprised at how warm the boy’s hands are.

A soft wind scented with pines and moisture blows on the back of Will’s neck, setting his skin on edge. He heard a twig break to the left of them, followed by the soft patter of hooves. Will glances over, making eye contact with a deer and her offspring. Will nudges Hannibal in an attempt to get him to look without startling the creatures.

“Hm?” Hannibal says, inadvertently scaring the creature away.

They stand still for a moment, eyeing each other, and then the deer rushes off across the clearing, hurdling over tree-roots haphazardly as her little fawn jumps after her.

“You scared her away,” Will frowns.

“A deer?” Hannibal guesses.

Will nods, continuing forward. He offers to carry the basket for a little bit, but Hannibal declines. His rationale being that Will is still healing, and he doesn’t need to be carrying anything. Except, the basket isn’t that heavy, and he’s fussing over Will more than he needs to be.

Will follows the sound of rushing water until the view opens up before him. He’s struck by the sight of the waterfall cascading over rocks and spilling into a bubbling pool beneath. The roar of the water fills the air, and Will can hear a faint echo bouncing off the walls of a cave behind it. He marvels at its beauty, taking in every detail - the shimmering droplets of mist, the glistening stones it splashed against, and the lush green moss that seems to coat everything in sight. The smell of rich soil fills his nostrils as he inhales deeply, savoring the moment of awe and wonder.

“Follow me,” Hannibal instructs with an outstretched hand.

Will takes the proffered hand and they make their way up a small trail parallel with the waterfall. Once above it, there’s a small clearing, where the sun shines down on the short grass growing from the earth. He wonders if there’d be any good fishing here, but the thought leaves him immediately upon recalling that he’s here with Hannibal, and that they’re *on a date.*

Hannibal spreads the blankets on the grass covered ground, and as if on cue, Will’s stomach rumbles. His stomach is in knots, and he’s not sure if it’s because he’s hungry, or if it’s because Hannibal looks beautiful today. The boy does. He’s dressed down more than usual, and his hair appears to be devoid of product. The smile gracing his face is an easy, relaxed one and his eyes convey the same emotion. He’s happy, and Will’s never seen anything–or anyone, more beautiful.

“Hungry?” Hannibal guesses.

“Starving,” Will confirms.

His mouth waters as he sees what Hannibal has prepared. It isn’t even anything fancy. Just sandwiches. Thick sliced turkey on homemade bread with provolone cheese, tomatoes, and lettuce. Will has to remember his manners when the boy pulls out a thermos of freshly squeezed lemonade as well. He’s never been so hungry in his life.

“Eat. Let me know what you think.” Hannibal instructs him, handing him a carefully wrapped sandwich.

Will takes his first bite and he moans. It sounds orgasmic, and Hannibal’s face flushes at the noise. It goes straight to his cock. Will swallows, realizing the sound he’d just made and the flush on his face now matches Hannibal’s.

“This is great,” He says, before taking another bite.

They eat in silence, Will doing his best to contain the nearly salacious moans threatening to be ripped from his throat at the taste. The lemonade is great, too. It’s much better than anything Will’s ever had, though his experience with lemonade is limited to the kind you can get at the grocery store in a bottle. He’s never had any homemade.

Finished with their food, Will looks to Hannibal, “Now what?”

“Now I teach you how to fight.” Hannibal grins.

Will immediately lets his body go slack as Hannibal’s hands touch him and roam over him, adjusting his arm here and his leg there. His face is flushed from the contact. He wonders if this level of contact is really required for such a lesson.

Will is awkward—ungainly in his movements—like a colt stepping on the earth for the first time. He is not sure where to look or what to do with his body or his face; his gaze flits between Hannibal and the rocks in the ground.

Being so close to the boy, Hannibal's nose is filled with his scent. It is all Will, all-encompassing. There is a slight tremor beneath Hannibal's fingers as they graze over Will's skin; he knows Will is nervous and he feels it as if it were his own, pounding through his ears.

He smirks and pulls Will close, then pins him to the ground.

When Will struggles against him, Hannibal taunts him: "If you had been paying attention, you might have avoided being pinned. Be more aware of your surroundings," he says.

Hannibal's words are almost lost on Will, as his mind is consumed with the sensation of the boy's body pressing against his own. He breathes heavily, feeling his stomach tense with arousal and his face flush further. Even in such a state, with Hannibal pinning him to the ground, the boy's hands are gentle. Will bites his lip, making eye contact with the boy on top of him. His face is red, too. His pupils are wide with what Will assumes is arousal.

Hannibal's heart jumps in his throat as he takes in the sight of Will beneath him. His grip tightens on Will's arms, his fingers pressing into the smooth warm skin. Glancing away from his eyes down to the sliver of skin exposed by his shirt riding up, Hannibal's mouth goes dry. The heat of arousal rushes through him as the feeling becomes more prominent in his jeans.

"Kiss me," Will begs, shuddering beneath Hannibal's touch.

He obliges, his mouth meeting Will's in a bruising kiss. The feeling of soft lips against his own makes him forget where they are and what they're meant to be doing. Will's hips lift of their own accord, searching and not finding the friction he desperately desires against his aching groin.

Breaking the kiss, Hannibal looks down at Will and relishes the sight of the boy's kiss swollen lips. He's hard now, achingly so. Will squirms beneath him, equally as aroused. Will can feel the warmth of his own arousal dampening his boxers.

Will is unsure if he's ready to take things beyond kissing, or even if he'd be comfortable with being touched directly through his clothing. He struggles to push Hannibal off of him suddenly, desperately trying to keep the panic rapidly rising inside him at bay. He fears what could happen if he inadvertently leads Hannibal on, the worry clogging his throat, leaving him unable to speak. Hannibal doesn't catch on to what Will is trying to do right away and Will lets out a whimper.

"Let me up," Will whispers.

Hannibal jerks away from the trembling boy, feeling embarrassed he had let his desire take over. He wants to hug or comfort Will, but he does not know if he will be welcomed. So, he just sits beside him, waiting stupidly to be told what to do.

After a moment of silence, Hannibal dares to speak; "Are you okay?"

Will looks up at him, almost as if surprised he's still there. His eyes glisten with unshed tears and he nods, "I panicked."

“I gathered as much. Do you know why?” Hannibal asks.

Will tells him.

“I’ll never do anything you don’t want to do. And if you ask me to stop, I will.”

“Wouldn’t that hurt you?”

Logically, Will knows the notion is stupid. Francis had clearly been lying to him about blue balls. Even if the condition (if it can even be called that) causes some discomfort, it can’t be so severe that one needs to force themselves on another. It was simply an excuse to hurt him.

“No, it wouldn’t.” Hannibal confirms.

“Francis said—” Will starts.

“Whatever Francis told you is a lie.” Hannibal interrupts.

Will inches closer to Hannibal and nestles his head against the boy's body. At this invitation, Hannibal wraps his arms around him and holds him close. He takes a deep breath, taking in Will's scent, and he closes his eyes.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sleepily, Will realizes they really didn't do anything to help him learn self defense. But, he finds he doesn't much care being engulfed by all things Hannibal. He listens to the nearby rushing of water hitting rock, birds singing, and wind rustling the trees and he feels completely at peace.

He reaches up to place his palm against Hannibal's cheek, feeling the smooth skin there. He prefers it to the rough way Francis' cheek felt against his body. Though he thinks he'd still like Hannibal's face even with a full beard. He likes everything about the boy.

Tilting his head up, he meets Hannibal's lips in a kiss. He brings both hands up to grasp his hair and groans into the feeling of it all. *Jesus Christ, Hannibal is a phenomenal kisser,* he thinks, smiling to himself.

Both fully awake and in tune with each other's bodies, Will maneuvers himself to straddle the other boy's lap. The motion elicits a groan from Hannibal, whose arousal is evident in his pants. Will feels the boy's arousal against his groin, and is reminded of his own. He feels swollen, throbbing, *aching* for Hannibal's touch.

The fire burning inside him feels like it'll only be extinguished by Hannibal's touch, and the notion scares him. But he forgets his fear when Hannibal's lips make contact with his neck, gently sucking on the soft skin there. Will holds on to him for dear life, not even trying to hold back the sounds of pleasure spilling from his mouth.

To be touched like this, to be worshiped, is a foreign feeling for Will. His only experience was with Francis, and he never made Will feel like *this* . Thankfully they're in a really secluded area of the park, or he'd be worried other park goers would hear them. Though, he must admit, the fear of being caught makes it a little more arousing.

"Don't mark me, please. Don't want my dad to see it," Will groans.

He'd like to be marked though. He wants to feel Hannibal's teeth bite into his skin. Maybe *just* hard enough to draw blood.

Hannibal moves to his shoulder, biting a little harder, then looks up at Will making sure he's alright. Oddly enough, this isn't causing him to panic. Perhaps it's because he's on top, straddling Hannibal. He doesn't feel trapped.

At the sight of Hannibal's questioning gaze, Will decides to take the lead and guides Hannibal's hands to caress him in all the right places. He moves them over his body, letting himself surrender to the pleasure he's feeling. The fire inside him grows brighter and brighter as he takes in every sensation that comes with being touched by Hannibal.

He guides Hannibal's hands to his chest and he immediately begins toying with his nipples, eliciting another pleased moan from the boy. He plays with them, pinching them gently until they're pebbled, hard and protruding against Will's shirt.

Hannibal's hands move from his chest and find purchase on the backs of his thighs, gently laying Will down on the now rumpled blanket. Will lets out a surprised gasp, and immediately misses the contact. Hannibal straddles him slowly, caging Will's legs between his own, and leans down to kiss the boy.

Uselessly, Will's hips lift in search of friction, but he isn't getting any that way. He squeezes his thighs together, to relieve the ache in his groin, but he finds it only works to tease him further. He wants to ask Hannibal to touch him, but he's too lost in his arousal to form words.

Hannibal begins to trail his lips down Will’s body, taking a detour from the boy’s chest and instead making his way down to the soft skin of Will’s stomach. He can feel Hannibal’s breath on him, and the sensation sends shivers all over his body. Will watches as Hannibal moves lower, nipping and licking at his skin gently, sending sparks of pleasure radiating throughout every inch of him.

He lets out a low moan as Hannibal continues to move impossibly lower, teasing him mercilessly with little licks and bites that make him shudder each time they touch his sensitive flesh. His hips twitch involuntarily, rocking forward ever so slightly as he begs for more. He thinks he might come when Hannibal's tongue licks across his hips just above where his jeans sit.

When Hannibal adjusts his position to free Will's legs, he opens them immediately, allowing Hannibal to slot himself between them. Unable to resist the temptation, Hannibal pushes his hips forward, making contact with Will's groin. Both boys moan, wishing there were fewer layers between them.

Hannibal's cock is painfully hard and trapped in his jeans, though he doesn't care much about that. He's too busy taking in the almost debauched sight of Will beneath him.

Will's breaths come out in pants, his face is flushed red, and his pupils are blown wide with lust. Hannibal files away the image into the halls of his memory palace. He'll certainly think of this moment for years to come.

Will watches Hannibal with a dry mouth, only hearing the way his heartbeat thumps inside his chest, as if it's trying to free itself from his ribcage. He whines when Hannibal's deft fingers finally find the button of his jeans. Hannibal glances up to ensure Will is okay, and he answers the wordless question with a frantic nod.

Will glances around them, looking to ensure no one is around, and is pleased to see that they're still alone in their secluded paradise. His attention is brought back to Hannibal when he hears the sound of his zipper being tugged down. He lifts his hips to assist in the removal of the garments, and to his dismay, Hannibal only pulls them down to the halfway point of his hips. He groans at the feeling of his swollen clit and aching hole being hit with the cool air.

Hannibal marvels at the sight beneath him, Will writhing there, begging to be touched. And who is Hannibal to deny him? He trails his hand down past Will's curly dark pubic hair and finds his clit, rubbing it with his index and middle fingers. He ventures lower to get some of Will's wetness on his fingers, not missing the way it makes him flinch. His body goes lax once more when Hannibal returns his attention to his clit.

Will throws his head backwards when he feels Hannibal's hot mouth just above his groin. He resists the urge to tilt his hips up to feel the warmth against his flesh. He doesn't have to wait long though, because Hannibal slides down and gets more comfortable and then his tongue is on Will. First, he swirls it around Will's clit, purposefully avoiding the swollen organ, making Will whine.

Hannibal only gets more passionate and frenzied, as he finally devours Will with his mouth. He suckles on his clit, teasing the sensitive tip gently before lapping up every drop of pleasure. His hands grip Will's hips tightly, anchoring him to the ground as Hannibal works his magic on him.

Will gasps and whines as waves of pleasure course through his veins. He feels like he's going to burst from the feeling of being touched like this by Hannibal. It's a pleasure he never expected to feel in this lifetime and it makes him want more — something that Hannibal will gladly give him.

The reverie is shattered when Hannibal's finger begins to stroke the outside of his hole, though Hannibal's tongue continues its assault on his clit, so he struggles to make any sounds but those of pleasure.

When Hannibal slides a digit inside him, Will gasps at the discomfort. It feels like an intrusion, but it isn't *that* painful. He feels his walls clinch down on the finger, and that hurts. It's like a muscle cramp, and it distracts him from the pleasure he was feeling just a moment ago.

Finally, some of the haze clears and he grits out a quiet, " *Hurts* ,"

Hannibal hears him and immediately removes his finger, though he does not stop lapping at his clit with his tongue. Will immediately begins to feel better, and cards his fingers through Hannibal's hair as he feels his orgasm building. The tendrils of pleasure spread from his groin, down to his toes and up to his cheeks as a moan escapes him. He braces himself for the waves of pleasure that soon crash through him as his orgasm takes over.

His legs involuntarily attempt to close on Hannibal's head, but the boy endures it, using his tongue while Will rides out possibly the most intense orgasm of his life. Once it passes and his legs relax, Will falls bonelessly to the ground, unable to move. He gasps, catching his breath and looks at Hannibal. He smiles at the boy, and notices the way his lips and chin shine with his release.

"That was... wow." Will whispers, in awe.

Hannibal licks his lips, responding with a satisfied smile. And he is satisfied, in a way. But his cock is not, still achingly hard and pressing against his pants. Will seems to notice,

glancing down at his predicament.

"Can I?" Will asks, biting his pink lips nervously.

Hannibal nods. He's entirely Will's. He knows he'd let the boy do anything he wants to him. He watches, mesmerized as Will's hands fumble with his belt and then pop open the button on his pants. Without preamble, Will's hand gets inside his boxers, pulling his cock free. He looks at it, intimidated by its size.

Experimentally, he strokes it once, languidly from the tip to the root. Swiping his thumb over the head and smearing the precome there, he smiles as Hannibal shudders. Encouraged, Will grips him a bit more firmly and begins to stroke him, faster and harder. His thumb circles the head as his palm slides up and down his shaft, each stroke intensifying Hannibal's moans. Will is worried he might be going too hard and too fast, but Hannibal just pulls him closer with a grip on his hair, pushing his hips up against Will's hand.

Will takes that as an invitation to keep going until Hannibal is panting heavily and close to the edge. He looks into Will's eyes knowingly before he crashes over it with a loud groan, spilling onto Will's hand and the blanket beneath them. They both lay there for what feels like an eternity, basking in their post-orgasm haze before finally finding their way back to reality.

Chapter End Notes

Why must I have 3 WIPs at the same time?

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will had first discovered something wasn't quite right with himself a few years ago. At the age of twelve, he knew some of what sex was, and he knew he wanted to try it someday. Out of curiosity, he'd touched himself for the first time. It had hurt then. He'd tried inserting his finger inside his opening, dry, of course. He was *twelve,* he was unaware there was another way. The feeling was akin to nails on a chalkboard. Aside from the pain of his walls clenching down on the finger, he'd hated the way it felt to have the skin of his finger brushing against his walls.

Soon after that, he'd discovered a much better way of pleasuring himself using the shower head. He preferred it that way, because he never needed to touch himself. Being alone, and young as he was, he never thought of his issue as something really problematic, but now as he's gotten older, he wonders if he's *defective* .

He'd hoped it was dysphoria, that maybe it would get better once he started hormones, but it didn't. He'd tried again before he met Francis and found his aversion still intact. He'd inserted a finger into himself and cringed at the sensation, the pain in his groin akin to menstrual cramps. After that, he'd avoided that part of himself completely.

He and Hannibal are still lying together on the blanket, looking up at the clear sky through the trees when he realizes he's been lost in thought. The orgasm Hannibal had given him was nothing short of mind blowing, but he'd been left with an all too familiar ache between his legs. It's certainly not as severe as how it had felt after Francis, but it's there. And he wonders *why* . It can't be normal. A finger is no bigger than a tampon (not that he uses those). Surely other people with vaginas don't deal with this.

His face, unbeknownst to him, is twisted in displeasure at the thought, and when Hannibal looks over at him, he's concerned.

"Did I hurt you?" He asks, sitting up.

"Yeah, some. When you put your finger inside." Will admits quietly.

He doesn't even like *talking* about it. But he sees no reason to lie to Hannibal. The boy sees him for all that he is, and he doubts this will change his view.

"How does it hurt? I mean… what does it feel like?" Hannibal asks.

"It feels like a muscle cramp, and it *burns* . My body seems to want to lock up, to prevent the penetration entirely."

"But I did get inside you. With a finger. I only felt a little resistance."

"Right. And that's par for the course. I can do that, but it hurts. A lot. Anything... bigger, and it doesn't go in at all."

Hannibal knows what he means by anything *bigger* , though he doesn't know the extent of what happened with Francis. It didn't seem like something he should ask about, rather that he should wait until Will is comfortable enough to tell him.

Will takes a deep breath before he continues. “So, it's like an ache, and it gets worse the more I try to push against it. Francis… well, he tried to push deeper and it felt like I was being ripped apart from the inside. That time really exacerbated my aversion to having anything inside of me. Whatever problem I have, it's ten times worse now.”

Will's face pales at the admission, and his arms automatically come up around himself in a self-soothing gesture. He hasn't really sat down and talked with anyone about it, assuming they'd known enough once they’d seen the photos. But for all he knows, Francis might have told everyone they fucked, even though they didn't. Even though Will *couldn't* .

The air between them is thick and taut. "Did he...?" Hannibal begins, his words heavy with dread.

"Did he fuck me?" Will asks, his voice sharp with an anger not directed at Hannibal. "Not quite. He tried. Fuck, did he try."

"I sometimes think it would have been less painful if he had." Will whispers, mostly to himself, after a moment of silence.

Hannibal frowns at the utterance. He’s not sure if he was meant to hear it, but it leaves an ashy taste in his mouth regardless.

Whenever Will thinks of that night with Francis, he feels the phantom ache it left behind, though now, the ache is there for real. Not the same in intensity, but it’s the same kind of pain. This confuses him. He’d wanted Hannibal in a way he’d never wanted Francis. *Why* had his body fought against it?

Will's breathing comes in ragged gasps and his heart pounds, as if it is trying to escape his chest. His stomach feels like a twisted knot and his vision blurs at the edges. He knows the familiar signs of an impending panic attack all too well. His body trembles, and his stomach threatens to empty itself of the lunch he'd recently eaten. It feels like his head is underwater, and he can't seem to rise above the surface.

Hannibal knows all too well what Will is going through, having suffered panic attacks when he was younger, and moves to calm him down. He takes Will's hands in his own and squeezes gently, pushing his thumb into the other's palm in a soothing fashion.

"Breathe with me," Hannibal encourages softly. "Slowly, in through your nose and out through your mouth."

He guides Will slowly through some breathing exercises, taking deep breaths himself so that Will can mirror him if he chooses. As they continue on like this for a few minutes, Hannibal

talks quietly about nothing of consequence, letting the sound of his voice help to soothe him further while Will focuses on regulating his breathing pattern. Eventually, his heart rate starts to slow and the knot in his stomach loosens up as he takes deeper breaths more easily now.

"Thanks," Will says, unable to form any other, *better* words.

Nobody had ever even tried to help him through an attack like this. The way most people would look at him, like he's a spectacle to behold, made his anxiety worse. All he'd wanted in those moments is for someone to care about him, to see him struggling and want to help. The idea that he's quite possibly lived his entire life without someone so attentive hits him like a punch to the gut. He'd never considered himself lonely, but maybe that's because he never knew what it was like to not be lonely. But now he knows, and he feels as if he'd do anything to keep the loneliness away.

He wipes the back of his hand across his eyes, clearing away a few stray tears there, and looks to Hannibal. Seeing the way the boy is looking at him makes something break inside him, and he cries. It devolves into sobbing, and soon, Hannibal's arms are wrapped around him once more. He wonders why Hannibal tolerates him, given that he's such a mess.

"I'm sorry," Will says, over and over again. "I'm sorry."

"For what?" Hannibal asks, continuing to stroke Will's back as he tries to calm himself down.

"For freaking out. For being such a mess." Will hiccups.

"You're not a mess. You just had a panic attack. There's nothing wrong with that." Hannibal tells him.

Will sniffs and leans into Hannibal, resting his head on the other's shoulder. He sniffles and wipes the tears away from his face before the boy gets them all over him. He can't help but think about how long it's been since he’s felt this secure, how long it’s been since he was held like this, and he revels in the sensation.

He never wants to leave.

He never wants Hannibal to leave.

As he thinks these things, he knows it's inevitable. Despite Hannibal's reassurances, he'll get tired of Will sooner or later. Knowing this fact, he resolves to enjoy whatever time he has left with the boy.

Chapter End Notes

Will has vaginismus, he does not yet know there's a name for what he's dealing with

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

I've had the worst case of writer's block I've had since I started writing. 🙃

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal conjures up all the different ways to orchestrate Francis' demise. In his mind, he imagines killing the boy mercilessly, then displaying him as a gift for Will. Though he's gotten to know Will better over the last weeks, he isn't sure the other boy would take pleasure in such a *gift* . And Hannibal isn't keen on losing what they've just gained together. He *likes* Will.

He doesn't get to see much of him over the coming weeks, but they text daily, and most evenings they do speak on the phone. Hannibal feels lovesick. He finds himself longing to see Will, and to hold him close. It isn't something he's used to feeling, having kept most people at arm's length.

But Will, he has no trouble letting his guard down around. Hannibal has spent more time with Will than he has any other person in possibly his entire life. In the weeks since Francis had fooled Will into thinking he was safe to be with, Hannibal's gotten a better picture of what makes Will tick, what he likes and dislikes. He's taken note of every goal Will has and every fear he has. He knows everything there is to know about Will Graham.

While Hannibal would typically use that to manipulate Will further, he has no such intent this time. Instead, he wants to help Will in any way he can. He wants Will to reach his goals, to achieve his dreams. He's worked out that Will wants to be a professor someday, the boy saying he wants to talk *at* his students, not *with* them. It had made Hannibal smile.

Will can't believe it's December already. The winter dance is coming up, and Beverly won't stop hounding him about it. She knows about his relationship with Hannibal, and often hints that Will should ask him to go.

"C'mon, you know you want to!" Beverly says, nudging him with her shoulder.

Will blushes, as he does every time she brings it up. He would be lying if he said he hadn't imagined what it'd be like to take Hannibal to the dance. To see the boy dressed in an even fancier outfit. It wouldn't surprise Will if he donned a tuxedo for such an event. The dance is only a week away, so if he's going to ask, he needs to do it now so he can get the tickets.

"I don't know. What if he says no?" Will replies, face still a dark shade of red.

"He isn't going to say no. He likes you, Will." Beverly tells him. "I've asked someone!"

Glad to have the conversation turned away from himself he asks, "who?"

"Margot." Beverly replies.

"Wait... Margot, as in Margot *Verger* ?"

"She's nothing like her brother!"

Mason is relentless in his torment of freshmen and sophomores. As a junior, it's as if he thinks he runs the school. Like anyone actually cares that his father owns a meat packing company. His father is rich, and that's all the boy has going for him. Will is aware that he has a sister but he's never met her, only seen her a few times in passing. Beverly wouldn't have asked her to the dance if she wasn't a decent person, so he's worrying for no reason.

"Just be careful. People don't always show you who they are right away." He finally says.

"I know." Beverly replies, frowning.

It's obvious Will is talking about Francis. The older boy is still a sore subject for him. Especially given he has to see him almost daily, aside from when he gets himself suspended, which he does often enough, thankfully. He wonders if Francis is going to the dance, and if he is, is he bringing a date? It's not Will's problem, he knows that. But he worries for anyone else who might find themselves blinded by the boy's charm.

Later in the day, as Will walks into his art class, he decides to ask Hannibal to the dance. The worst that could happen is that he says no. And Will wants to push himself out of his comfort zone. Going to a dance would *certainly* do that.

He takes a deep breath and sits next to Hannibal. "So, the winter dance is coming up in a week. I was wondering if you'd like to go with me?" He asks nervously, eyes glued to his desk top.

Hannibal looks over at Will, his gentle eyes glinting in the light of day. Hannibal smiles fondly, his lips twitching upwards into a small smile as he gently cups Will's chin in his hand, unbothered that they're in a classroom surrounded by other people.

"I'd be honored." Hannibal says softly, voice low and gentle as always. He takes hold of Will's hand and gives it a slight squeeze for added reassurance before letting go again.

Will can feel himself blush further across his cheeks as he looks up at Hannibal gratefully. "Good," he says as he takes out his sketch for class. "I'm looking forward to it."

"As am I." Hannibal replies.

Hannibal wanted to ask Will a few weeks ago, but he hadn't. He's more social than Will is, and was under the impression Will would prefer to avoid events like those. He'd worried that asking him would have put Will in an uncomfortable position of either saying 'no', or saying 'yes' and having a terrible time.

After school, Will meets up with Beverly, panicked.

"What's wrong, Graham?" Beverly asks, clocking him immediately.

"Hannibal said yes, but I don't have anything to wear." He groans.

"Does that mean you want to go shopping?" She asks.

"I... no. I don't have any money." He replies sheepishly. "But maybe I can borrow some from my dad."

He knows as he says it he won't be asking for any money from the man. Not with the way he's been grumbling over the bills lying on the kitchen table for a couple of weeks. His job has been slow. It always gets slower when the weather cools off, so they're always tight on cash this time of year.

Will knows where his dad keeps his emergency cash, and wonders if the man would notice if $100 went missing. He could probably get a cheap suit for that.

He chews at his lip, considering the option. It seems like the only one. He *could* ask Hannibal for help. The boy seems to have no money trouble. He'd probably be happy to help, but Will doesn't want him to think he's a freeloader. So taking the money from his dad is the best option, he decides.

"You do that, and we can go shopping on Friday!" Beverly replies, excited.

Will didn't think she was the kind of person to get excited over a shopping trip, but seeing her practically giddy with the idea makes him smile, too.

"Sounds like a plan." He says, then they part ways to walk home.

Once he gets home, he's relieved to see his father isn't there. He can take the money now and hide it under his mattress. His dad will never find out, and then he'll figure out a way to replace it soon. He knows he's playing with fire, knows very well that his father could find it gone. And then he'd be *fucked* .

Shaking his head, he banishes the thought. He's going to do this, and he's going to have a great time with his date. dropping his bag by the door, he heads straight into his father's room and into his closet. On the highest shelf, he finds the safe with the money inside. The combination is his birthday. His dad hadn't told him that, but he'd worked it out for a situation just like this, though in his head he'd expected it to be more of an emergency than getting a suit for a dance.

He shrugs, taking $100 from the safe and replacing it on the shelf exactly how he found it. The box has a thin layer of dust on it, meaning it hasn't been touched in a while. All the more reason to think his father won't notice.

He hides the money under his mattress and gets started on his homework, ignoring the anxiety clawing at his throat. He doesn't know how many times he tells himself everything is going to be fine, but it doesn't matter. He still feels sick to his stomach.

Chapter End Notes

Will, you should trust your gut. That was probably a bad idea...

Chapter 14

The next day, Will comes to school with the money he'd borrowed tucked safely in his backpack. He isn't well versed on what to buy for a dance, and he doesn't know if he and Hannibal are supposed to coordinate their outfits, he guesses that yes, they are. It would be odd to go to an event like this and not match. But, his paltry $100 isn't going to get him anything fancy, and he doesn't want Hannibal to have to wear something cheap just to match him.

His brows are furrowed as if in deep thought when Beverly approaches him.

"What's on your mind?" She asks.

"I got $100, but Hannibal is *fancy* , you've seen how he dresses. Anything I buy is going to look terrible next to him." Will admits, miserably.

Beverly bites her lip, her face reddening ever so slightly. She points just behind Will, who immediately whips around. Hannibal is right behind him and heard what he'd just said, if the wide, amused smile on his face is anything to go by.

"You think I'm *fancy* ?" He asks, emphasizing the word just as Will had.

"I mean," Will stammers, "yeah."

"You're right that $100 isn't going to buy you much, but I have something that might." Hannibal says, pulling out his wallet and flashing a credit card with his aunt's name on it.

"You can't buy me a suit." Will argues.

"I hadn't planned on buying you a suit."

Will tilts his head in confusion.

"I'm wearing a tuxedo, and would like you to wear one, too." Hannibal reveals.

Will's eyes widen. He's never even owned a tuxedo, his dad doesn't even own one. People like them don't need them. A cheap suit for funerals are all that's necessary, though Will doesn't even have that. He cringes thinking of the black dress still hidden in the recesses of his closet.

"I have an appointment with my tailor after school today, you should come."

"But I…" Will starts pathetically, looking at Beverly who only seems amused by the interaction. "I told Beverly she and I would be going shopping today."

"She can come, too." Hannibal confirms.

“I’d love to, but I don’t want to be the third wheel with you guys. You go ahead, Will. We can go shopping some other time.” She replies, smiling warmly.

Will nods his agreement and they make their way to their respective classes. The bell had already rung, meaning the three of them are already late so Will stops by the restroom, content to find it empty. As he's washing his hands, he hears someone enter the bathroom, their sneakers squeaking on the dirty tile floor. He doesn't think anything of it until the boy approaches him and reveals himself in the mirror.

Will avoids the desire to groan in dissatisfaction. Of course it'd be Francis. He'd thought the boy would be suspended for a few more days and hadn't had his guard up. He swallows thickly, making eye contact with him via the mirror, frozen like a deer in headlights. It's been weeks since the incident with Francis, and it still often occupies the forefront of his brain. It likely doesn't help that he sees the boy often. Though, the last couple of weeks had been quiet. Even when Francis was at school, he hadn't gone out of his way to bother Will.

Will suspects it's because he has a new plaything. A sweet, dark haired boy by the name of Adam. If Will didn't know any better, he'd think himself and Adam were long lost siblings. Maybe that's why Francis latched onto him.

Will flinches when a large hand rests on his shoulder. He shudders at the unwelcome touch. Being this close to Francis, and being able to smell the boy's musk and the lingering stench of marijuana makes Will's stomach turn. He wants to turn and dart out of the bathroom, but he finds himself glued to the spot. He doesn't have a fight or flight response, he *freezes* . Any bravado he'd had during their previous interactions is gone now that they're alone and nobody is around to help him.

"Where's Adam?" Will finally croaks out.

"Don't worry about him, darling." Francis purrs, his lips close to the shell of Will's ear.

"What do you want?"

"I've overheard you've come into some money. I want it." Francis answers, moving to rip Will's backpack off his shoulders.

"I don't... I don't have anything!" Will cries out in a lie.

"I don't like liars, Will." Francis growls, shoving him backward against the sink. The porcelain makes contact with his spine and causes him to groan in pain.

Will watches, unable to do anything as Francis searches through his bag. He unzips everything, making its contents fall out onto the floor. All of Will's books, papers, pens, and pencils spill out in every direction. Francis, still unsatisfied, finds several zippered pockets and opens those. There he finds Will's more *personal* items. A bottle of ibuprofen, a few pads (though he doesn't get his period often and could probably take them out, but he hates the idea of being unprepared), and then the $100 bill he'd stolen from his father.

Will's face flushes a dark red, hating the way the contents of his backpack are on display for the world to see (the world being only Francis). He worries that the sight of the hygiene products will anger Francis, reminding him of Will's earlier 'deception', but it doesn't seem to register in the older boy's mind that they're pads. It makes sense, given that Francis likely spends most of his time with other boys.

Will banishes the thought of *real* boys not needing to carry things like those. Of course he wouldn't know what they are. Will wonders if Francis ever even had a mother or if he truly is the spawn of Satan himself.

"There it is," Francis says, grabbing the money from the floor.

Will doesn't beg the boy not to take it. It would only work to make him look even more pathetic or maybe even give him some new bruises if he were particularly unlucky. Francis leaves, and Will kneels down to collect his things, cringing at being on the bathroom floor. Kids are disgusting. Who knows what he's currently got his knees on.

After a few minutes, he's got everything back into his bag and has regained his composure. He heads to class, knowing he'll likely be sent to the front office for a tardy slip. He'll take the punishment, hoping to avoid any calls from the school to his father. What Francis does is bullying, there's no doubt about it, but his father would blame him somehow, he's sure.

He was supposed to keep to himself, keep who he is a secret, and he couldn't do it. He feels himself spiraling as he makes his way into the classroom. It's biology with Mr. Price. The man had been lenient with Will in the past, but the look on his face tells Will that lenience has run out.

"Mr. Graham, do you have a pass?" Mr. Price asks.

"No, sir." Will responds, looking at his feet.

"Please, go to the office and get one."

Will nods, turning on his heel and heads back into the hallway. It's quiet during class hours and he doesn't see any other students. He briefly wonders if anyone would notice if he slipped out the front door and didn't come back today. Banishing the thought, he goes to the front desk to ask for a pass.

"This is your third unexcused tardy. You'll need to report to in school suspension today." The secretary tells him.

"But I--" Will starts, then clamps his mouth shut. He shouldn't argue.

"Are you going to call my dad?" He asks instead.

At that moment, Dr. Bloom comes into the office, looking to Will then to the secretary.

"Do you mind if I handle this?" She asks the woman behind the desk.

"Go right ahead."

Will silently follows Dr. Bloom to her office. His next appointment isn't for a few days, so he isn't sure why she's done this. She beckons him inside and he makes himself comfortable in the seat he always sits in. It creaks beneath him as he sits down.

"This seems to be becoming a habit, Will." She admonishes.

"I know. Please don't call my father." He replies.

"I'm not going to, not yet." She affirms, and Will lets out the breath he'd been holding.

"Why were you late today?" She asks.

Will takes a deep breath, recounting the story to her. Dr. Bloom listens carefully, her eyebrows raising in surprise when Will mentions Francis and the way he was cornered in the bathroom.

"He's done this for weeks, hasn't he?" She inquires.

"Yes," Will chokes out, feeling tears prick at the back of his eyes. He had been trying so hard to keep all of this hidden from everyone else and here he was spilling his guts to someone who could make it all worse with one phone call.

Dr. Bloom sighs before leaning over her desk towards him and placing a hand on his shoulder reassuringly. "Will, bullying can take many forms and it's important for you to recognize what is happening here." She says softly.

Will nods silently, having heard this speech before but hoping that maybe today something would be different; that something would finally stick with him to help him handle this better in the future. Everyone knows what you're 'supposed' to do when you're being bullied, but he can't do that. Reporting Francis to the principal would only create more problems for him. His father would be notified and it would make things *substantially* worse.

He doesn't realize he's trembling, lost in his own head with thoughts about what could happen.

"I can't report it," He finally says.

"Because you don't want your father to know?" Dr. Bloom guesses.

"Yeah. He can be... *unpredictable* ." Will admits.

"Is he abusing you?"

"No!"

Will wants to say that he just drinks too much sometimes, that he gets angry. He hits Will sometimes, sure, but he deserves it, *right* ? In his mind, there are plenty of ways to explain away his father's treatment of him but none of it would matter to a mandated reporter like Dr. Bloom. Anyone on the outside would think Will is being abused.

"He just works a lot. He's tired when he's home. I don't want to bother him with something like this." Will says, probably too quickly.

Dr. Bloom doesn't believe him. It's obvious that Will is *afraid* of his father, perhaps more afraid of him than he is of Francis. But there isn't much she can do if he won't admit to it.

"Alright. Get to class." She says, handing him an ‘ *excused* tardy’ pass. No in school suspension for him.

By the time Will gets there, first period is almost over. Beverly gives him a look but doesn't say anything as he sits down with a wince. He's only now just realized how sore his back is from the way he'd been thrown against the sink in the bathroom. He reaches behind himself to rub the sore spot along his spine, hissing when the touch only makes it hurt more rather than soothe it. He's sure it's going to bruise--if it hasn't already.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

At the end of the school day, Will waits for Hannibal out front. He’s going to tell him he can’t go, that he lost the money he had. He’s going to apologize and go home and wallow in his self pity. But when Hannibal approaches him, the notion flies out the window.

Hannibal smiles widely at Will before his face falls. He can see how torn Will is, and the way he’s holding himself. Will is easy to read. His body language and facial expressions are like an open book.

“What’s wrong?” Hannibal asks.

Will sighs deeply, feeling the weight of his situation press down on him. He tells Hannibal about Francis, about how he cornered Will in the bathroom and took the money he had. Misery radiates from Will as his gaze stays fixed on Hannibal's feet.

Hannibal furrows his brow and takes a step closer to Will, carefully placing a hand on his shoulder in comfort. It’s nothing like Francis’ grabby hands full of rage. This is gentle and understanding, like an embrace from a friend--or a lover.

"Hey, it doesn't matter. We don't need the money anyway. I have my aunt's credit card, remember?" Hannibal reminds him.

"I know... but I wanted to at least give you some of the money you're going to spend." Will replies.

"I don't need it and my aunt wasn't expecting it. It's *fine* , Will."

Will nods, unsure what else to do. He wants this to go well. The last thing he wants to do is cancel on Hannibal after he was the one who asked him. The worry of the lost money, and how he's going to replace it without his father knowing is pushed aside. He follows Hannibal quietly to his car and they make the short drive to their appointment.

The tailor’s shop is located a few blocks away from the school, tucked away in an alleyway behind what looks like an old abandoned theater. It’s odd that this spot was chosen for such a boutique establishment, but the thought is forgotten once they're inside. The walls are adorned with bolts of expensive silk and satin fabric in shades ranging from black to gold to emerald green - luxurious materials that immediately draw Will in and make him want them all even if he doesn't know what occasion they'd be used for just yet. He's never pictured himself walking into an establishment like this. He feels as if he's sticking out like a sore thumb.

"Hannibal!" The tailor greets. The man is older, with a gentle smile playing on his lips. "How are you?"

"I am well, thank you Ernesto." Hannibal replies, smiling.

"Who is this handsome young man?" Ernesto asks, noticing Will.

"This is Will. He is my date to the dance."

Will nervously shuffles closer. It sounds odd to be introduced as his date, even though that's precisely what he is. He looks up at Ernesto and sees no animosity toward him, an uncommon occurrence in the south. He always expects disgust or disdain from anyone who finds out he's anything but a cis, heterosexual male.

"So we're fitting you boys for... tuxedos?" Ernesto questions, looking down at his notes.

Hannibal nods, his arm snaking around Will's waist to pull him closer. Will's anxiety is stifling, and he can tell the boy wants to do nothing more than run out of the building. Hannibal isn't immediately sure *why* , but knows he wants to comfort him.

Unaware of Will's anxiety, Ernesto begins talking about the different style and color options for their tuxedos. He tells them that they can choose between a traditional black tuxedo, or a more daring midnight blue. He mentions other colors such as burgundy and navy blue, but believes those shades may be too bold for the occasion. The only thing they won't have to worry about is the fit, because Ernesto assures them his measurements are very accurate. He also has many accessories to offer - from bow ties to suspenders and cummerbunds - so that they can customize their look even further.

"I like the midnight blue. It'll compliment your eyes." Hannibal says, looking at Will.

"O-okay," Will stutters in response. He likes the midnight blue, too. But he knows nothing about style and has decided to go along with whatever Hannibal chooses, he smiles at the coincidence that they like the same color.

With their tuxedo styles chosen, Ernesto motions for Will to come over to him for measurements.

Will steps hesitantly forward, the warmth of Hannibal's arm no longer around him. Ernesto runs the fabric measuring tape up and down Will's body, noting his measurements out loud as he goes. He takes his time to make sure each measurement is exact and perfect, allowing Will to feel safe in this strange new place.

As he stands there, Ernesto compliments Will on his figure - a gesture for which Will blushes profusely - and suggests that the midnight blue tuxedo will look great against his fair complexion.

If it had been anyone but Ernesto, Hannibal would have growled in displeasure. But he knows the kind, old man means nothing inappropriate by it.

When all of Will's measurements are taken, Ernesto smiles warmly at Will and shakes his hand before ushering them both out of the shop with promises that their tuxedos will be ready in a few days' time.

"Don't you need to be measured?" Will asks, brows furrowed.

"I was just measured last week for a new suit. He still has those measurements." Hannibal replies.

Will hums in understanding, allowing himself to be led from the shop and back into Hannibal's car.

"Do I have to take you home now?" Hannibal asks.

"Not for a few hours." Will replies, smirking.

Their hands find one another, Hannibal's squeezing Will's as they drive home. Will's father is at work and shouldn't be home until later in the evening, so they have time. He hates having to go behind his father's back to spend time with his boyfriend, but telling the man the truth would be even more disastrous, he's sure.

Lady Murasaki is home when they arrive. She greets the boys warmly, and Hannibal gives her the credit card he'd borrowed.

"How did it go?" She asks.

"Perfect, as always." Hannibal responds.

She smiles, glad for their fitting to have gone well.

"Are you hungry? I was about to make a late lunch."

Hannibal says yes, having heard the way Will's stomach seems to constantly growl. She shoos them away and they head upstairs to Hannibal's room. Will finds a seat on Hannibal's bed, toeing off his shoes. He's less nervous now, having been here before, so relaxation comes more quickly.

"I cannot wait to see you in that midnight blue," Hannibal purrs, moving closer to Will. "You'll be even more stunning than you already are, if that is even possible."

The compliment makes Will blush furiously, the redness spreading all the way up to the tips of his ears. He'll never be used to being called *stunning* .

"Nobody will even notice me if I'm standing next to *you* ." Will replies.

"Nonsense." Hannibal says, punctuating the word with a kiss.

The kiss is enough to make Will ache. It's been what feels like an eternity since they've been together, *alone* , like this. And Will wants more of Hannibal. He craves it.

His hands fist in Hannibal's shirt, pulling him closer, making the other boy practically fall on top of him. Hannibal obliges, allowing himself to be positioned however Will wants him. He situates himself between Will's open legs and kisses him again. This time, he takes the boy's lower lip between his teeth and bites gently, eliciting a quiet moan from him.

Their groins are close to one another. It would only take a small movement to be touching. Hannibal can feel the warmth of Will's arousal against his own, making his cock so hard it aches within its confines. Hannibal gasps when Will's hips cant up and they connect. It's almost enough to make Hannibal come in his pants like the teenage boy that he is.

"Want to feel more of you," Will says, his fingers moving to the button of his own jeans.

Hannibal stops his hand, leaving Will to meet his gaze in confusion. He throws his head back with a quiet groan when Hannibal begins undressing him instead. His pants now gone, clad in only his boxers and T-shirt, Will feels so much more of Hannibal. He's more aware of his own wetness and the way it feels exposed to Hannibal with only the thin cotton barrier. He shivers in arousal.

Despite how perfect it feels to have Hannibal's hands on him, he gently pushes against the boy, motioning for him to stand. Hannibal does so immediately, a look of concern on his face.

He worries briefly that he's done something to upset Will, but the thought is forgotten when it's clear Will only wanted to switch positions. It's Hannibal's turn to groan appreciatively as Will's hands push up his shirt and licks a line up his chest. His hands find the waistband of Hannibal's pants and begin unbuttoning them.

Will pulls the pants down and off, pushing them off of Hannibal's feet without a word. He takes a moment to appreciate how beautiful Hannibal looks in just his boxers lying on the bed.

Will covers Hannibal's body with his own, straddling his hips. He takes a break from kissing him to look into his eyes - eyes that show nothing but love and desire for him - and takes a breath. It's inconceivable that someone like *Hannibal* could desire someone like *Will* .

He leans down, pressing their lips together once more. The kiss is gentle, savoring, and both boys moan into one another's mouths. Will grinds his hips against Hannibal's, sending sparks of pleasure up through his body. Finally, he drifts lower, intent on pleasuring Hannibal.

He rubs Hannibal's boxer-clad cock, feeling the way it twitches at the attention. He pulls it free of its confines and it bobs upward, a new bead of pre-cum forming at the time. Will swipes at it with his thumb, causing Hannibal to groan.

Will strokes the length of Hannibal's cock, making sure to pay attention to every ridge and vein. He circles his thumb around the head once more before taking it into his mouth. The taste is sweet and salty, and Will moves his tongue in time with his hand as he sucks on Hannibal. His cock is large, too large for it to fit comfortably in Will's mouth, but he doesn't mind.

Will's brain almost short circuits at the idea of having Hannibal's cock *inside* him. He knows it isn't possible and yet he can feel himself ache with the desire, as if his body is wholly unaware of the limitations its given him.

He takes Hannibal's cock as deep as he can, tasting what he can of Hannibal before pulling back up. He moves one hand to cup Hannibal's balls as he continues to pleasure him with his

mouth, hoping it will drive Hannibal over the edge. He's not sure he's any good at giving head, but if the way Hannibal tenses beneath him and the soft moans falling from his lips are any indication, he can't be terrible at it.

His own arousal ignored, he continues working Hannibal's cock in his mouth. His jaw begins to ache and he can feel himself drooling around the boy's cock, but he doesn't mind. He wants to pleasure Hannibal, wants to give him a modicum of the feelings he's given Will.

As Hannibal rapidly approaches orgasm, there's a knock on his bedroom door. The person behind it does not wait for a response and the door begins to open. Hannibal's cock falls from Will's mouth, both boys knowing they can't do a thing about the compromising position they've found themselves in.

Hannibal's aunt pauses, wide eyes looking at the boys for a split second before she turns and walks out of the room. She shuts the door behind her.

"Please, get dressed. Lunch is ready." She finally says.

Will feels like he might die of shame and embarrassment. And then, an even more troubling thought occurs to him. *What if she tells his father?*

As the redress and emerge from the bedroom, Hannibal's aunt turns to face them. She takes a deep breath and offers them an understanding smile.

"Well, it appears that you two were quite busy," she says softly. "Will, I won’t be telling your father about what happened here today, but I ask for you both to promise me one thing: be careful."

Will and Hannibal look at each other sheepishly. Though Will is relieved that she doesn't see the need to tell his father. He doesn't want to imagine what might happen if he knew.

"Will, are you alright?" Lady Murasaki asks, seeing the way his face had paled.

"I... yes." He stammers, unsure if he should tell her about his father.

"My dad doesn't like that I'm gay." He finally says.

"I understand. As I said, I'm not going to tell him about this."

Crisis averted, they follow her downstairs to have quite possibly the most awkward lunch in both of their lifetimes.

Chapter End Notes

Starting another fic gave me motivation to work on this one more lol

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